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Analysing *ṭhumrī*

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

2013

Department of Music,
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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a music-analytical study of the North Indian semi-classical vocal genre *ṭhumrī*. I am interested in the musical style of *ṭhumrī*, in its social environment and in how the two are related. In order to address this relationship, I advocate a multifaceted, interdisciplinary approach to music analysis, incorporating theoretical concepts from linguistics, semiotics and gender studies. Early in the thesis, I analyse the structural building blocks of *ṭhumrī*, drawing attention to parallels with language and other musical traditions. I then apply theories of semiotics to *ṭhumrī* in order to tackle age-old questions about how and why music comes to be meaningful for the people who perform and listen to it. This lays the foundations for the remaining chapters of my thesis, in which I look at how *ṭhumrī* participates in broader social processes. I argue that singers' musical decisions form part of social strategies, through which singers attempt to improve their own status and negotiate a better position for *ṭhumrī* within North Indian classical music. Finally I consider *ṭhumrī*'s gendered associations and the role musical performance plays in the social construction of gender. Overall this study is an exercise in doing analysis "in context": I suggest that the musical style of *ṭhumrī* best makes sense when considered in relation to issues of transmission, prestige, respectability, connoisseurship, spirituality and gender. Ultimately I argue that the musical features of *ṭhumrī* are not merely abstract phenomena, but are thoroughly embedded in particular historical, social and cultural circumstances.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Thumrī in the twentieth century

What is thumrī?

Thumrī is one of the principal genres of North Indian classical vocal music, alongside *khyāl* and *dhrupad*. It can be heard at performances in concerts and festivals in India and internationally and is widely available on CD and for download from the internet. *Thumrī*'s lyrics are often romantic in nature; for many the genre carries associations with love and lovers parted. These lyrics are spoken by a first-person, female protagonist. Sometimes, musicians tell audiences that this protagonist is Radha or one of the *gopīs* (milkmaids and lovers of Krishna in Hindu mythology), singing of love and longing for the absent Krishna.

Within the hierarchy of North Indian classical music, *thumrī* is classified as “semi-classical” or “light classical”. It shares this label with several related genres, including *dādrā*, *caitī* and *tappā*. Only the genres *khyāl* and *dhrupad* are called simply “classical”. These different designations do not imply a difference in performance context in the same way that the labels “classical music” and “popular music” do in the UK. On the contrary, *thumrī* is usually performed alongside *khyāl*, at concerts billed as “classical” and given by classically-trained musicians. Rather, the difference between classical and semi-classical genres lies in their musical characteristics, in the theoretical distinctions that underpin those characteristics and in their relative prestige and respectability.

Musicians often state that the primary difference between classical and semi-classical genres concerns their treatment of *rāg*. *Rāg* is a central determinant of classicality in North Indian music: much space in musicological studies both ancient and modern is devoted to the theoretical discussion of *rāg* and strict adherence to the rules of *rāg* confers an air of classical seriousness to a performance. In *khyāl* and *dhrupad*, musicians and audiences consider the correct rendition of the *rāg* of the performance to be of the utmost importance; any departure from the notes and phrases which belong to the *rāg* would be a serious error. In semi-classical genres, however, more flexibility is permitted; musicians may temporarily depart from the *rāg* of the composition without attracting criticism. In addition, semi-classical genres are usually performed in different *rāgs* from those used in classical genres.

A number of other musical features mark out semi-classical genres in performance. Semi-classical performances are usually shorter than classical ones, contributing to the impression

that they are less weighty and demanding. They are characterised by distinctive melodic ornamentation. They also involve particular musical devices which musicians use in order to convey the meanings and emotional connotations of the lyrics. This contrasts with the approach taken in classical genres, in which the words of the lyrics often serve merely as a vehicle for melodic or rhythmic play, their meaning rendered largely insignificant.

Thumrī's semi-classical status is not merely a matter of abstract, musical distinctions between different genres; it is also a remnant of the genre's troubled history within North Indian classical music. When North Indian classical music emerged in the public sphere, *thumrī*'s position within the canon of classical genres was initially the subject of some debate. For social reasons (discussed in the next section), many felt that *thumrī* was not an appropriate companion for *khyāl* and *dhrupad* in a prestigious musical tradition. The classification "semi-classical" reflects *thumrī*'s ambiguous status, never universally accepted into the classical tradition.

Thumrī before 1960

North Indian classical music, in its present incarnation, emerged in the public sphere in the early decades of the twentieth century. Before that, what came to be known as North Indian classical music had consisted of a number of courtly musical genres, which were performed to aristocratic patrons in intimate musical gatherings. *Thumrī* used to be performed by courtesans. They would both sing and dance *thumrī* to male patrons, with whom they sometimes also had sexual relations.

Under British colonial rule the feudal aristocracy fell into decline, taking with it the primary source of patronage for classical musicians; this threatened musicians' continued ability to earn a livelihood. Meanwhile new performance contexts were emerging. One particular set of opportunities for musicians arose as the result of the efforts of a number of self-proclaimed music reformers, including, most famously, Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande. These reformers believed that Indian classical music required saving and set about disseminating it more widely. They promoted the formerly elite Indian classical music to the general public as a national, often specifically Hindu, heritage and as a classical tradition, sometimes comparing it with Western classical music. They organised conferences and public concerts, set up educational institutions, wrote music treatises and textbooks, collected and notated compositions and argued for renewed attention to ancient Sanskrit treatises on music. As a result of their efforts, North Indian classical music became popular with middle-class (rather than aristocratic) audiences. Eventually found in the public concert hall, on gramophone records and on the radio, it came to be thought of as a national tradition.

A number of scholars have written in depth about this transitional period in North Indian classical music. Janaki Bakhle has detailed the reforms in North Indian classical music in her

book *Two Men and Music* (2005), focussing on the roles played by prominent music reformers (and some musicians) in the remodelling of North Indian classical music. Eriko Kobayashi (2003), too, has written about this period of change; she examines music reformers' rhetoric, looking at the arguments by which they explained their project. In addition to a Hindu nationalist discourse also highlighted by Bakhle (2005), she points to ways in which reformers invoked a discourse of modernisation and progress in relation to the changes they were bringing about in Indian classical music (see especially 2003: 26-48). Pamela Moro (2004) has looked comparatively at the relationship between musical canonisation and the construction of national culture in India, Indonesia and Thailand. Amanda Weidman (2003, 2005 and 2006) is one of a number who have discussed a comparable transition in South Indian music.

Katherine Schofield has pointed out that many accounts of Indian classical music's relocation to the public concert hall speak of a concurrent process of "classicization", in which, for the first time, Indian classical music was " 'invented' as classical", partly in response to British colonialism (2010: 487-488). She warns that this narrative risks giving the misleading impression that the music that existed before this transitional period was "unmarked, unprestigious, unsystematized, with no interest shown in its age or authenticity, and no conscious link to written theoretical traditions" (488). Disputing this, Schofield notes the existence of "substantial pre-colonial evidence" to contradict both "the proposition of a radical discursive break in the North Indian musical field between pre-colonial and colonial systems of knowledge" and also "the idea that there was no notion of art music in North India before the British Raj" (499). She also points out that the transition that scholars such as Bakhle describe as occurring at the turn of the twentieth century has parallels with a much earlier discursive shift that occurred in the seventeenth-century Mughal court. Nevertheless she acknowledges the changes that occurred in North Indian classical music in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, noting both a process of modernisation and, accompanying this, a "significant transformation of musical discourse". She characterises this as a "re-classicization", that is, "a new discursive wave of veneration, canonization, standardization and systematization" which involved "the cross-fertilization of colonial and nationalist, British and modern Hindu ideals and values" (489). (I will discuss some of the implications of Schofield's idea of "re-classicization" in Chapter 4 of this thesis.)

Male and female musicians fared very differently during this period of transition. Male hereditary musicians were central to the music reforms; they were invited to music conferences and encouraged to take on students in order to facilitate the wider dissemination of Indian classical music. Meanwhile their female counterparts, who mostly hailed from hereditary communities of courtesans, were viewed with suspicion and treated with ambivalence by the music reformers. This was largely the result of a number of social reform movements that had

emerged in the last decades of the nineteenth century. The so-called “Anti-Nautch” (literally “anti-dance”) campaign had been specifically targeted at various groups of female musicians and dancers (including *tawā’if*, *ṭhumrī*’s traditional performers), who were frowned upon because of their sexual availability to their patrons: this had left many with the impression that courtesans were no different from prostitutes. Veena Oldenburg has pointed out ways in which the colonial British treatment of courtesans also contributed to their diminishing status and their increasing conflation with prostitutes (1990: 260-261). Vidya Rao discusses the effect this had on *ṭhumrī* singers, noting their marked loss of status in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as they were increasingly associated with debauchery and became subject to legal sanctions, including, eventually, the abolition of courtesans’ salons (1996: 288-296).

The music reformer Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande did not invite women musicians to a number of his renowned All India Music Conferences. He explained this decision in a letter he wrote to a friend in 1928, stating that they “had to be tabooed for fear that the conference would thereby lose the confidence of the general public” (quoted in Chinchore 1990: 24). As well as being shunned by many music reformers, female performers also suffered an enormous professional blow when in 1950 the All India Radio introduced a ban on “anyone whose private life is a public scandal”, which was, in both intent and effect, a ban on courtesans. Regula Qureshi notes that one result of this ban was that “hereditary female singers – though not their male accompanists – were thus shut out of the major venue of government patronage” (2001: 111). Professional ostracism, coupled with the loss of their aristocratic patrons, cost many courtesans their careers. Qureshi describes a conference put on in 1984 celebrating “Women Music Makers of India” which managed to bring together some long-retired courtesans. She writes that many were now impoverished and that “after decades of (respectable) silence, few were still able to sing” (99). In a pessimistic article, Jennifer Post laments the demise of the courtesan tradition, writing that “since the 1940s, the traditions of the professional female musicians have all but disappeared” (1987: 106).

With the emergence of formal, institutional music education for both girls and boys and when male hereditary musicians started taking on pupils, both male and female, from outside their own families, a number of middle-class, non-courtesan women began to train as professional performers of Indian classical music (see Das Gupta 2005: 474-5). Daniel Neuman (1980: 207), Janaki Bakhle (2005) and Jennifer Post (1987) have written about the debilitating effect of the competition these relatively respectable women gave to former courtesans. Bakhle writes that “by the 1950s, a whole generation of *baijis* [courtesans] had been replaced by upper-caste women singers, who were respectable, chaste, and asexual in their affect” (2005: 225). Post

suggests that the entry of middle-class women onto the concert-hall stage sounded the “final death knell” for the courtesan tradition (1987: 106).¹

However, even women musicians from non-courtesan backgrounds suffered on account of the sense of disrepute that is often attached to female musicians. Some faced disapproval from their families or husbands for choosing to perform in public. Amelia Maciszewski writes, for example, of the singer Mira Banerjee, who had to deal with criticism from her relatives for her choice of career. They asked her father (and initial teacher), “What, are you making your daughter into a *baiji* [courtesan]?” (2001a:145) On more than one occasion, unmarried women musicians have told me that they have faced criticism and suspicion on account of their choice to remain single. These difficulties are particularly exaggerated in the case of women singers who perform the genres traditionally sung by courtesans: they are often simply assumed to hail from a courtesan background, regardless of their actual biographical circumstances.

Just as male and female hereditary musicians fared very differently in the new, concert-hall based North Indian classical music, so some genres were more easily adopted into the new tradition than others. The music most associated with male hereditary musicians, the classical genres *khyāl* and *dhrupad*, became the central focus of the music reforms. Courtesans’ genres, *thumrī* chief among them, had a more problematic status. Before the music reforms, courtesans used to sing and dance them in intimate settings for their aristocratic patrons; music was one of the courtesans’ tools of seduction. By the early years of the twentieth century, far more than the music of male hereditary musicians, courtesans’ genres were associated with the perceived debauchery, decadence and immorality of the declining feudal aristocracy. In 1925, at one of the sessions of Bhatkhande’s celebrated All India Music Conference, Dilip Kumar Roy presented a paper arguing for his fellow reformers to pay greater attention to *thumrī*. He lamented the current position of the genre, noting that “*thumrī* has, generally speaking, got into the bad books of classical musicians as well as connoisseurs”. He describes male hereditary musicians’ attempts to distance themselves from *thumrī* and its singers, writing, “Kheyal [*khyāl*] Singers have been known to leave a musical gathering in pious horror if a *Thumrī* singer should have had the hardihood to offer to pollute the atmosphere rendered sacrosanct by their previous kheyal singing” (Roy 1990 [1925]: 26-27). Still, although it never fully achieved the prestige or respectability of *khyāl* and *dhrupad* and although it is considered only “semi-classical”, *thumrī* has remained part of North Indian classical music until the present day.

¹ Although the courtesan tradition has, for the most part, disappeared since the middle of the twentieth century, it would be an exaggeration to claim that it has ceased to exist altogether. A number of scholars have documented ways in which it continued to exist even after its official abolition. These include Veena Oldenburg (1990) and Amelia Maciszewski (2001a, 2001b and 2006). Shweta Sachdeva-Jha (2009) and Gerry Farrell (1993) have noted the opportunities which the emergent gramophone industry afforded courtesans in the early twentieth century. Francesca Cassio has recorded and released a CD of music sung by Saira Begum, who considers herself the last surviving courtesan of Banaras.

Peter Manuel's *Thumrī in Historical and Stylistic Perspectives* (1989) is the only English-language monograph written on *ṭhumrī* and contains the most detailed and extensive research carried out on *ṭhumrī* to date. Much of Manuel's book is devoted to demonstrating the many implications of *ṭhumrī*'s move into the public sphere, as part of the relocation of North Indian classical music as a whole. He argues that the genre only survived this period of transition as a result of undergoing a transformation, which rendered it more acceptable to classical music's new audiences (1989: 71-96). Manuel points out that musicians at this time almost completely abandoned *ṭhumrī*'s dance and gestural aspects, these recalling too much the seductive movements of courtesans; by no longer drawing attention to their bodies by dancing in performance, musicians were able to claim for the genre a purely abstract, musical value. *Thumrī*'s new performance contexts themselves partly neutralised the negative associations with which it had been tainted: now sung by both men and women in public (rather than merely by courtesans in the salon), it began to achieve greater respectability.

Likewise in her book on *ṭhumrī*'s lyrics, Lalita du Perron (2007) details ways in which *ṭhumrī*'s supporters recast the texts of *ṭhumrī* so that they would not offend the sensibilities of middle-class listeners. *Thumrī*'s lyrics often speak of love and of longing for an absent lover. In their old context, a courtesan might address these words to her patrons in order to seduce them. Perron notes that in the new performance contexts of North Indian classical music, musicians started instead to emphasise devotional interpretations of *ṭhumrī*'s amorous lyrics, insisting that they speak merely of love for the god Krishna, and encouraging audiences to read them as an analogy for human love for the divine (2007: 55-64). In some cases, musicians altered specifically erotic turns of phrase, substituting them with less salacious alternatives (see Perron 2002: 190 for examples of this).

Manuel notes that the musical character of the genre also changed dramatically, such that "a nineteenth-century singer would probably never recognise as *ṭhumrī* a current rendition of the form" (1989: 222). Early in the twentieth century, a new *ṭhumrī* style, which came to be known as the *bol banāo ṭhumrī*, emerged in Banaras. This grew in popularity and eventually eclipsed the older *bandīś ṭhumrī*. Some of the musical differences between these two forms were matters of geography. Distancing their style from the older one, associated above all with Lucknow, Banaras-based singers incorporated a number of local folk influences into the *bol banāo ṭhumrī*. Manuel also notes that the development of the *bol banāo ṭhumrī* involved a process of "classicization" in the genre, in which it came to resemble more closely the indisputably classical (and more respectable) *khyāl* and *dhrupad* (1986: 480-1). The *bol banāo ṭhumrī* was longer in performance than its predecessor and had a slower overall pace which, Manuel notes, parallels a similar reduction in pace in *khyāl* (480). It was also characterised by a greater emphasis on abstract musical development, as embodied in the process known as *vistār*. *Vistār*

is a quintessentially classical feature: it is the process in which a musician reveals a *rāg* to the audience, expanding the register of the performance gradually by introducing successively higher notes in successive phrases. It derives ultimately from the unmetered section (*ālāp*) that occurs at the beginning of a *dhrupad* performance. The borrowing of musical characteristics from the respectable and more prestigious genres *khyāl* and *dhrupad*, Manuel suggests, allowed musicians and audiences to see increasing artistic merit in *thumrī*.

Thumrī after 1960

While Manuel, Perron and others have presented a detailed picture of the sociological changes affecting *thumrī* at the beginning of the twentieth century and of their musical consequences, very little scholarly literature has addressed *thumrī*'s development in the period after 1960. Manuel's study of *thumrī* touches only briefly on this period. Instead, he privileges the time between 1920 and 1960 as a highpoint in the genre's history. Titling his description of 1920 - 1960 "The *Bol Banāo Thumrī* in its Prime", he identifies musical trends which produced a "blossoming and maturation" of the genre and reached their "culmination" at that time (1989: 82-3).

His discussion of "recent developments in the genre", on the other hand, is very limited. It extends over only four pages and paints a dismal picture. Manuel admits that the widespread dissemination of different musical styles has fostered "the enhanced musical variety and richness of contemporary *thumrī*" (1989: 92-3) and that "standards of intonation, technique, and control of nuance are at least as high, if not higher, than they were two generations ago" (1986: 481). However, he believes that the post-1960 *thumrī* has suffered from neglect by musicians and audiences alike. He laments that it has come to function "in a slightly reduced capacity, that is, as a short, sentimental finale" to a *khyāl* performance (1989: 96), attributing this "relatively insignificant" position to "the evident demand of the current, more sophisticated bourgeois audience for the serious, abstract development of *khayāl*" (94-5). He suggests that audiences have come to "expect less profundity and depth from [*thumrī*]" . This, he claims, has had a negative impact on *thumrī*'s musical development: seeing the demise of *thumrī* even in its stylistic characteristics, he suggests that *thumrī*'s classicisation had finished by 1960. Subsequently, he claims, audiences' "demand for serious music" has "contributed to the neglect and further 'lightening' of *thumrī*" (95).

Manuel also attributes a general "dissatisfaction with modern *thumrī*" to the fact that "no singer of the present generation has achieved the status of the deceased giants of *thumrī*", explaining this simply as "the fortuitous failure of certain generations to produce musical geniuses" (91). The idea that *thumrī* after 1960 lacks worthy exponents lies behind his decision not to discuss this period in detail. He states that "it is difficult to assess the state of the art and of recent

developments in general, or to compare and contrast them with the *thumrī* of 1950, in view of the fact that there are presently no singers of stature comparable to those of the previous generation". He concludes his book with a dark warning, writing that "it remains to be seen whether a future generation will revitalize *thumrī* by imparting to it the emotional depth and intensity it enjoyed in the hands of the great geniuses of the last generations" (227).

According to Manuel, "musicians and critics tend to agree that the period from 1920 to 1960 was the zenith of Hindustani vocal music" (1989: 82-3). Indeed, the account he presents is in keeping with what appears to be a broad consensus amongst scholars and musicians that Indian classical music enjoyed a golden age in the middle of the twentieth century (or else even earlier) and has since fallen into decline. Other literature has also emphasised the earlier greatness of Indian classical music while painting a bleak picture of its development in the second half of the twentieth century. Wim van der Meer, writing in 1980, describes a number of "recent changes" in the tradition. Reading all of these as forms of decline, he talks of a contemporary "crisis" in Hindustani music; he concludes his book on a distinctly ominous note, fearing that the "great achievement of *raga*" is in danger of being lost (1980: 166-189, 193). Irfan Zuberi, speaking thirty years later, seemed to capture the scholarly mood in a paper he presented at the Indian Musicological Society conference in November 2008. He echoed the negative stance of Manuel and van der Meer, this time putting an Adornian gloss on the now-familiar historical narrative. According to his account, Indian classical music's recent decline is a result of its commoditisation by the contemporary music business.

Likewise, many of the singers and music connoisseurs I interviewed complained of what they consider to be an overall decline in standards in performances of North Indian classical music. For musicians this idea came up when they talked nostalgically about "greats" of the past, lamenting their demise and describing their own performances as deficient in comparison. Connoisseurs often spoke of North Indian classical music's diminishing audiences and of their impression that today's listeners are largely ignorant when it comes to discerning what makes great music. They often also expressed the fear that Indian classical music might soon disappear altogether.

However, in spite of these gloomy analyses and ominous predictions, Indian classical music nevertheless remains a thriving tradition. Nowadays it is performed widely and it has attracted audiences of enthusiastic fans all over the world, even being included on the syllabus for GCSE music in the UK. The fate of *thumrī*, too, has not been as dismal as Manuel feared. His one-sided picture of the devaluing of *thumrī* takes little account of the genre's many advocates, both performers and connoisseurs. The recent release of a number of CDs by classical singers containing recordings only of *thumrī* further testifies to the high regard in which the genre is held. At the time Manuel was writing, singers such as Girija Devi and Bhimsen Joshi were

singing *ṭhumrī*s which many now hold in as high regard as anything the previous generation had accomplished; these singers are now considered among the greats of Indian classical music.

I would like to argue that scholars and musicians have been too quick to pronounce the fall of Indian classical music. In this thesis I will take a sceptical approach to their accounts of decline, understanding their statements as a manifestation of the near-universal human tendency to idealise the past. It is perhaps no surprise that the golden age they celebrate is also the time from which Indian classical music's earliest recordings date. (I will discuss further the social significance of "Golden Age" narratives about Indian classical music in Chapter 4 of this thesis.) In doing this research, I have taken an open-minded approach to recent *ṭhumrī*, judging its popularity and widely celebrated beauty reasons enough to warrant its study. Manuel's book on *ṭhumrī* was researched and published in the 1980s. With the benefit, now, of nearly thirty years' additional hindsight, I will question Manuel's claim that *ṭhumrī*'s "classicization" had finished by 1960 and was followed by a period of lightening in which it became increasingly trivial and unimportant in relation to *khyāl*. Instead I will argue that even after 1960 certain singers have continued to imbue *ṭhumrī* with an ever more classical ethos, by continuing to appropriate features from the classical genres *khyāl* and *dhrupad*.

Rāg, tāl and the analysis of ṭhumrī

In their entry on "*rāga*" in *Grove Music Online*, Harold Powers and Richard Widdess describe it as the "central element of South Asian classical music"; in a typical definition, they write that a *rāg* "is not a tune, nor is it a 'modal' scale, but rather a continuum with scale and tune as its extremes" (accessed 2013). Amongst the characteristic melodic features that define any particular *rāg*, Widdess lists: "a basic scale (perhaps with additional or omitted notes), grammatical rules governing the relative emphasis of different scale degrees and the sequence of notes in ascending and descending contexts, distinctive ways of ornamenting or pitching particular notes, and motifs or formulae from which complete melodies or improvisations can be constructed" (accessed 2013).

Like all North Indian classical and semi-classical genres, *ṭhumrī* is composed and performed in *rāgs*. However, as noted above, singers treat *rāg* differently in *ṭhumrī* and other semi-classical genres from the way they treat *rāg* in the classical genres *khyāl* and *dhrupad*. One of the key characteristics of semi-classical performances is a sense of flexibility when it comes to *rāg*, which contrasts strongly with the strictness that musicians exercise in their performances of classical genres. This flexibility comes in two forms. First, musicians can temporarily raise or lower certain scale degrees in the *rāg* they are singing, altering the scale pattern of the *rāg* for a short period, before returning to the "correct" version of the *rāg*. *Rāg Khamāj*, for example, uses

the natural or *śuddh* version of the fourth scale degree (M). In singing this *rāg*, however, a musician may temporarily raise this scale degree by a semi-tone so as to sing phrases involving sharpened or *tivra* M, before returning again to the original, natural version. The second form of flexibility that occurs in *ṭhumrī* is an expanded version of this; here, musicians may depart altogether from the home *rāg* they are rendering and temporarily modulate into other *rāgs*. This might involve altering more than one scale degree and singing characteristic phrases of the new *rāg*. As in the first type of flexibility, this normally does not last very long and is soon resolved by a return to the correct version of the home *rāg*.

In addition to this sense of flexibility, *ṭhumrī* is performed in particular, “semi-classical” *rāgs*; there is only minimal overlap between the *rāgs* used to perform *ṭhumrī* and those used to perform *khyāl*. Peter Manuel has discussed the characteristics of semi-classical *rāgs* in depth. He demonstrates that most semi-classical *rāgs* share certain structural features, which tend not to occur in classical *rāgs*. Amongst other things, for example, he notes that semi-classical *rāgs* often include more than one version of the same scale degree, allowing musicians to create similar musical effects within semi-classical *rāgs* as those they create by diverging from them in instances of flexibility (1989: 212).

While *rāg* is the key organising principle behind North Indian classical melody, *tāl* is the principle by which its metre is organised. In his authoritative book on North Indian classical rhythm and metre, *Time in Indian Music*, Martin Clayton describes *tāls* as “authorized metrical frameworks” which are “conceived as cyclically recurring patterns of fixed length”. He notes that *tāls* divide up time at three hierarchically arranged levels, such that each whole cycle of the *tāl* is called an *āvart*, which is broken into shorter sections, or *vibhāgs*, each of which consist of a number of *mātrās*, or beats. *Tāls* are distinguished from each other by the number of *mātrās* they use in each cycle, by the way these are arranged into *vibhāgs* and by the *ṭhekā*, “a basic recognizable pattern of [drum] strokes”, normally described using combinations of onomatopoeic syllables (2000: 43-44).

Just as he does for *rāg* in *ṭhumrī*, Manuel devotes a chapter of his book on *ṭhumrī* to describing the way that *tāl* occurs in the genre. He sees parallels between the flexible approach to *rāg* that characterises *ṭhumrī* and a similarly flexible approach to *tāl*. In particular, he notes inconsistencies and regional variations in the terminology used to describe *ṭhumrī tāls*. Likewise, he notes that *ṭhumrī tāls* are distinguished primarily by means of stress patterns; unlike the *tāls* used in classical genres, in semi-classical genres the number of *mātrās* in any particular *tāl* may vary (1989: 145-152). (*Dīpcandī*, a very common *ṭhumrī tāl*, thus exists in both 14-beat and 16-beat versions.)

Since Manuel has already comprehensively dealt with the ways that both *rāg* and *tāl* appear in *thumrī*, I will not address these concepts in detail in this thesis. I do, however, briefly touch upon both a number of times in the thesis, in the course of exploring other lines of inquiry. In Chapter 2 I consider the ways in which musical formulas in *thumrī* might be significant from the perspective of *rāg*. Later, in Chapter 4, I discuss how musicians' approaches to *rāg* are related to broader discourses on classicality and connoisseurship. Likewise I also touch on issues of *tāl* in Chapter 4, in an examination of the social significance of the different kinds of relationships that exist between singers' melodic lines and the underlying metre against which they are performed.

Analysis in context

Scholars of Indian classical music have long been interested in the precise details of its musical structures and modes. Echoing approaches taken in ancient treatises, some twentieth-century scholars have theorised *rāg*. Nazir Jairazbhoy's study *The Rags of North Indian Music* (1995 [1971]), for example, is a discussion of *rāg* evolution. Harold Powers has suggested borrowing models from linguistics in order to explain certain features of the *rāg* system (1976, 1980). Richard Widdess, meanwhile, has analysed the *rāgs* of early Indian music, based particularly on evidence in historical theoretical treatises (1995).

In recent years, a few scholars of North Indian classical music have started to do more detailed analyses of the musical style of particular musicians or pedagogical lineages and of the specifics of individual performances. In her monograph on *khyāl* (1984), for example, Bonnie Wade examines the characteristic features of the styles of different pedagogical lineages (*gharānās*). Stephen Slawek's study of *sitār* technique (1987) includes the transcription and analysis of a performance by Ravi Shankar. Richard Widdess and Ritwik Sanyal's authoritative study of *dhrupad* (2004) discusses different *dhrupad* styles, substantiating written descriptions with analytical evidence. Widdess also presents detailed analyses of performances of North Indian classical music elsewhere, for example in his chapter "Dynamics of melodic discourse in Indian music" (2011), in which he analyses a single *sitār* performance, and in his essay "Aspects of form in North Indian *ālāp* and *dhrupad*" (1981). Other recent music-analytical studies of North Indian classical music include Nicolas Magriel's PhD thesis (2001), in which he convincingly combines the analysis of individual performances with his discussions of the *sāra gīt* styles of two performers, Martin Clayton's article "Two gat forms for the sitār" (2003) and his book, *Time in Indian Music* (2000), Carl Clements' PhD thesis (2010) and article (2011) on Pannalal Ghosh and John Napier's work on melodic accompaniment (2007).

Thumrī, however, has received relatively little music-analytical attention. Peter Manuel's monograph is the only major analytical work on *thumrī* to date. He speaks of *thumrī* largely in general terms, profiling the stylistic characteristics of its two major forms, the historical *bandīś thumrī* and the *bol banāo thumrī* and writing about the social significance of the musical developments involved in the emergence of the *bol banāo thumrī*. Although he does briefly write about some of the characteristic stylistic features of well-known *thumrī* singers and lineages, the impressive breadth of his study renders impossible any extensive analytical focus on the styles of particular performers or on the details of particular performances. Furthermore, published in 1989 and focussing on musical developments in *thumrī* earlier in the twentieth century, Manuel's study does not cover the most recent period of *thumrī*'s history.

When other scholars write about *thumrī*'s musical content, they too tend to focus on general aspects of the genre, rather than on the specifics of particular performances or on the unique stylistic choices of individual musicians (see for example Rao 1990 and various contributors to Mehta, ed. 1990). Many studies of *thumrī* and *thumrī* singers do not address its musical features at all, focussing instead on its lyrics (Perron 2007) or the changing social situations of its performers (for example Maciszewski 2001a and 2001b, Qureshi 2001 and Post 1987).

In this study, I hope to begin to fill this gap in the literature on *thumrī*, by focussing in-depth analytical attention on *thumrī* in the second half of the twentieth century. My research has involved the transcription and analysis of a large number of *thumrī* performances, particularly from the second half of the twentieth century. In this thesis I look in detail at these performances, examining their stylistic and structural characteristics. I am interested in the differences between the *thumrī* styles of different performers, in the meanings evoked by particular musical characteristics and in the ways in which performances unfold over time, as musicians generate musical material on the spur of the moment.

My analytical approach is informed by a strand in (mainly Western classical) musical analysis, in which musical features are seen not (merely) as abstract, artistic phenomena, but as products of particular historical, social and cultural circumstances. This idea, often associated with the so-called "New musicology" (or, alternatively, "critical musicology") came to the fore in debates that raged in musicology in the 1980s and 1990s about the nature and purpose of musical analysis.

In his influential article, "How we got into analysis, and how to get out" (1980), Joseph Kerman critiqued the ideology of "organicism" that he believed lay behind music-analytical methods that were popular in America at the time. He noted analysts' widespread tendency to focus solely on revealing the "organic unity" of the pieces they chose to examine, often with the aim of demonstrating their greatness. He argued that this analytical priority was ideologically

motivated and that its effect was to produce a style of analysis that “sets out to discern and demonstrate the functional coherence of individual works of art” (312). He advocated the broader and more all-encompassing study of pieces of music, which he felt would be better called “criticism” than “analysis” (331). In subsequent debates, other scholars have picked up on many of the issues he raised. Central to these have been questions about music’s relationships with the social contexts in which it appears, and the extent to which music analysis can or should take these relationships into account. One of the criticisms most often levelled at music analysis, for instance, is that it sometimes appears to treat music as an abstract structure, as if it existed in a vacuum, apparently independent of the social and historical circumstances of its creators, performers and listeners. Kevin Korsyn launches a typical critique when he writes of his suspicion of techniques that were “developed primarily with respect to autonomous compositions” and that “use ‘internal’ methods of analysis, as if the piece were created outside time and parachuted into history” (1999:55).

Other scholars have insisted that analysis must take into account the fact that music is socially embedded. Susan McClary, for example, writes that “the power of music ... resides in its ability to shape the way we experience our bodies, emotions, subjectivities, desires, and social relations. And to study such effects demands that we recognize the ideological basis of music’s operations – its cultural constructedness” (2000: 6). In work on a variety of Western popular and classical music, she explores ways of analysing music so as to reveal aspects of this “cultural constructedness”. She is best known for her work on music and gender (1991); her other work includes a study of the subjectivities suggested by the musical structure of Renaissance madrigals (2004) and a consideration of the cultural norms articulated by the structural conventions of Western tonality (2000). The development of topic theory in the study of eighteenth-century music is a manifestation of a similar impulse. Inspired by Ratner (1980), topic theorists have detailed the specific extra-musical associations (for example military, hunt or pastoral) carried by particular sets of conventional music features for eighteenth-century listeners. In his discussion of the critiques of analysis that appeared in the 1980s and 1990s, Jim Samson identifies one possible response to those critiques, in which music theory and analysis would be redefined, so that they would “[confront] the social nature of [musical] materials”. Thus, he writes, “music theory, and the analysis which flows from it, would draw context into its discourse” (1999: 53). McClary’s work on gender and topic theory are two examples of how this might be done.

In ethnomusicology, music analysis has attracted criticism on account of its origins in a Western academic environment, the seeming inappropriateness of many of its techniques for the study of non-Western music and for its apparent failure to incorporate the perspectives of insiders in the music culture being studied. In their introduction to their book “Shadows in the field”, Timothy

Cooley and Gregory Barz tell a familiar story about the history of ethnomusicology. In their description, the transcription and close analysis of recorded performances is a research method that belongs in the past. It is associated above all with a prior incarnation of the discipline, which operated using a now-defunct research model according to which “music was an objectively observable fact to be collected in the field and manipulated in the laboratory”. They lament that the so-called “armchair ethnomusicologists” often did little or no fieldwork themselves and suggest that their seemingly scientific and objective methods were, in fact, a manifestation of Western intellectual imperialism. They go on to celebrate a move in the discipline towards new research methodologies, which emphasised researchers’ face-to-face engagement with insiders in the field (2008: 3-24). According to this historical narrative, musical analysis is an outdated research tool, rendered irrelevant by its association with an obsolete science paradigm with aspirations towards an unachievable objectivity, and which has since been supplanted by fieldwork as the primary research method for ethnomusicologists.

Barz and Cooley’s position is representative of a widespread approach in ethnomusicology, in which scholars respond to criticisms of analysis by neglecting it altogether, in favour of a more anthropological style of research. However, a number of ethnomusicologists have continued to practice close analysis of the music they write about and some have also participated in the (mainly Western musicological) debates about analysis and the relationship between music and its social context.

In her influential 1974 article, Marcia Herndon discusses different styles of analysis in ethnomusicological study. She argues that “if our goal is understanding of music in and as culture, we must begin with native categories, raw sound, and clear minds”. She continues, “Our assumption can only be that there is pattern on many levels; our goal can only be to locate that patterning” (251). Her arguments anticipate a move in ethnomusicology (identified by Nettl 2005: 103-106) towards prioritising insider categories in analysis as a way of responding to criticisms of analysis’ Western institutional bias. Widdess takes this idea to its logical conclusion in his article “Involving the performer in transcription and analysis” (1994), in which he explored analysing a recorded performance of Indian classical music in tandem with its performer.

Regula Qureshi (1987) has suggested one way in which musical analysis might take into account the effects on a performance of its context. She focuses on the immediate context of the performance, for example looking at how audience reactions might affect its performer(s). However, when she writes of that performance context as “a complex interplay between religious ideology and socio-economic factors” (56) or of “the performance occasion in its totality, to be considered as a socio-cultural institution with an established setting and procedure, supported by a shared conceptual framework and functioning within a particular

socio-economic structure” (69), she also, by implication, draws into her analysis the effects of the wider social context of the performance.

In his book, *May it Fill Your Soul: Experiencing Bulgarian Music* (1994), Tim Rice suggests a way of thinking about music that emphasises the social and economic factors that influence musicians’ aesthetic decisions. He suggests focussing studies of music on individual musicians, looking at “the human agent [who acts] upon history in society to create cultural forms such as music”. His study is based on the idea that “the individual inherits and appropriates musical practice, along with economic ideological and social practices, and then recreates, reconstructs and reinterprets them in each moment of the present” (32). He demonstrates this approach with an examination of two musicians, Kostadin and Todora Varimezov. He uses their experience as a lens through which to examine the development of Bulgarian folk music over the course of the twentieth century.

For Rice, analysis also forms part of the process through which a scholar who is new to a particular musical culture can gradually become more and more familiar with it, eventually achieving a perspective close to that of a cultural insider. Likewise, in a provocative article on her own experiences studying Central Australian women’s ritual music, Linda Barwick (1990) has also written about the importance of close musical analysis as part of the scholar’s process of getting to know unfamiliar music. She eschews the notion that analysis might be objective or scientific and instead writes about analysis as a transformative, subjective experience.

In a book chapter on the analysis of African music, Kofi Agawu, meanwhile, takes another view on the relationship between analysis and music’s context. Like many scholars who are critical of music analysis (for example Kevin Korsyn above), Agawu also characterises analysis as an activity that treats music abstractly, writing that, “music analysis ... minimizes certain forms of cultural knowledge and ... principally rewards the ability to take apart and discover or invent modes of internal relating” (2003:197). Unlike those other scholars, however, Agawu celebrates this fact, suggesting that it makes analysis accessible to scholars (particularly those based in Africa) who may not be trained in the research methods of the Western academy.² Jonathan Stock, meanwhile, has argued for the applicability to non-Western music of the Western institutional analytical technique *par excellence*, Schenkerian analysis. He argues that Schenkerian techniques offer a useful way of representing musical structure in a variety of contexts (1993).

² Agawu takes a very different approach in his studies of Western classical music. Rather than focussing on “modes of internal relating”, here he often specifically addresses issues related to the wider social meanings of particular musical features, taking a semiotic approach to musical style (see for example 1991, 1999 and 2009).

In this thesis, I present an exercise in doing analysis in context, focussing on the North Indian semi-classical genre *thumrī*. I hope to contribute to the growing body of such analysis in ethnomusicology; I avoid specifically Western analytical techniques in favour of ad hoc analysis, informed by extensive fieldwork in India, by interviews with musicians and music-lovers, by my experiences in learning to sing North Indian classical music with the vocalist Sunanda Sharma and by my reading of a variety of Indian musicological literature in Hindi and English. Following Widdess' example, I attempted wherever possible to analyse *thumrī* performances in the light of comments by their performers. My analytical method is inspired by the semiotic approach to music that McClary and the topic theorists adopt. Like them, I am interested in the shared connotations that music evokes for communities of musicians and listeners and in the effects on music of its social and historical contexts. As Tim Rice advocates, I chose to focus parts of my study on individual musicians (my teacher, Sunanda Sharma, and her teacher, the renowned vocalist Girija Devi) as a way of looking in microcosm at the influence of social factors on musical change and at the meanings music carries for the musicians who perform it.

My work forms part of a recent flourishing of interest in and enthusiasm for the analysis of so-called "world music" amongst both ethnomusicologists and music analysts. In the last decade, Michael Tenzer has brought out two edited volumes (2006 and 2011) on the analysis of world music, the second edited in tandem with John Roeder, and there have been two international conferences on "Analytical Approaches to World Music" (in 2010 and 2012), with a third planned for 2014. The conference also led to the successful creation of the journal *Analytical Approaches to World Music*, with three issues now published.

Methodology

In conducting the research for this thesis, there were two main aspects to my data-gathering activities: fieldwork and the transcription and close musical analysis of recorded performances. Combining these two research methods, I hope to be able to shed light on the social connotations of musical features and reveal some of the social factors which inform musicians' stylistic decisions.

In the course of conducting this research, I took three trips to India, one in autumn 2009, the next in spring to summer 2010 and the last, much shorter, in January 2011. In this thesis I also draw upon data gathered during an informal trip to India before the official start of my PhD, in which I spent four months living in Delhi and studying *thumrī* and *khyāl* singing intensively. I spent most of my time in India living in Delhi, but also visited Kolkata, Mumbai and Varanasi.

While in Delhi, I studied *ṭhumrī* and *khyāl* singing with the vocalist Sunanda Sharma (pupil of the renowned singer Girija Devi), often going to her house daily for lessons. This was an enlightening and fruitful research method: my conversations and lessons with Sharma are the single most important source of information upon which this thesis is based. Learning to sing myself provided crucial experiential evidence about the nature of North Indian classical music. I draw upon this experience, directly and indirectly, throughout the thesis. In Chapters 3 and 5 I make heavy use of one interview with Sharma, in which we discussed one of her recordings in depth. My close relationship with Sharma has also shed light on the music of her teacher, the renowned singer Girija Devi, whose *ṭhumrī* style I discuss in depth in Chapter 4. Although I did not have the opportunity to speak directly with Devi, Sharma's many descriptions and anecdotes about her provided an invaluable lens through which to view her *ṭhumrī* style.

In addition to talking with Sharma about North Indian classical music, I also had numerous other conversations with musicians and music-lovers during my time in India. Sometimes, these took the form of formal, recorded interviews; at other times, I spoke informally with musicians at concerts and conferences or over coffee or lunch. During these conversations, I spoke with musicians about *ṭhumrī* and its relationship with classical genres, about different *ṭhumrī* styles, about musicians' musical training and about their experiences of performance amongst other things.

As well as talking with musicians and taking singing lessons, I also attended numerous North Indian classical concerts, conferences and lecture demonstrations. I examined written literature and sound and video recordings in archives, including at the NCPA in Mumbai, the ARCE in Gurgaon (near Delhi), the Sangeet Natak Akademi in Delhi and ITC-Sangeet Research Academy in Kolkata. In the UK, I found further material in the library at the SOAS, University of London. I also studied literature in the New York Public Library. Over the past few years, I have purchased a large number of recordings from music shops in the UK and India, from music websites and through iTunes and Spotify. Additionally some private collectors kindly played or passed on to me audio files from their own collections.

In this thesis, I seek to account for the subtle musical details of recorded performances of *ṭhumrī* through musical analysis. In order to facilitate the process of analysis and to display my findings to the reader, I chose to represent the sounds of these recordings visually, in the form of transcriptions. Deciding to treat recordings in this way is controversial in today's ethnomusicology and the process of transcription and analysis is not without drawbacks; there has been much scholarly debate about how best to transcribe non-Western music and indeed whether it is valuable to attempt to represent normally un-notated music visually at all.

In ethnomusicology there are two common criticisms of using transcription and analysis to study music. First, some scholars consider transcription and analysis an inescapably Western technique, perhaps a corollary of Western classical analysts' reliance on the musical score, which is fundamentally inappropriate for the study of non-Western music and potentially highly misleading as a way of representing what is important about the music to those who perform and listen to it.

Second, scholars note the subjective nature of musical transcriptions (see for example Seeger 1958: 186-7). Despite their seemingly scientific objectivity (they purport simply to be a visual representation of what is heard), they inevitably represent some of the biases and agendas of the scholars who produce them and the academic backgrounds from which they hail. Most forms of transcription, for example, privilege pitch and rhythm over other musical features, such as timbre, which are much more difficult to represent on the page. As a result, these biases can be transferred onto the people who read the transcription, for whom seeing one scholar's visual representation of a recording can potentially affect the way that they hear that recording.

Despite these objections and potential drawbacks, I have nevertheless found transcription by ear to be a crucial and invaluable tool in the study of North Indian classical music. The argument that transcription is not objective or scientific ceases to be a problem and rather becomes an advantage if transcription is conceived of not as coming before analysis or as the grounds on which the analysis is based, but rather as part of the process of analysis itself. Making the case for subjective transcription by knowledgeable scholars, Nazir Jairazbhoy has argued that in the study of the "psychological and communicational aspects of music within a culture" there are many advantages to "aural transcriptions by a trained ethnomusicologist who has steeped himself in that culture" (1977: 270). The transcriptions I use here constitute my best attempt to represent what I hear in the recordings I discuss, based on my own experiences as a listener (and to a lesser extent a performer) of North Indian classical music; as such, they are necessarily subjective and should be viewed not as impartial or complete visual representations of the sounds of these performances. Rather I encourage the reader to view them merely as one of the means by which I communicate the results of my analysis and as a way of translating my understanding of North Indian classical music in such a way as to be comprehensible to other scholars, including those unfamiliar with this musical tradition. (See figure 6.1 for a particularly clear demonstration of the overlap between transcription and analysis; there I use an annotated transcription to draw attention to aspects of *thumrī* that I identify in my analysis throughout the thesis.)

As for arguments which emphasise the cultural inappropriateness of attempting to notate unnotated music, I would suggest that the fact the musicians themselves do not transcribe their music is no reason to reject an otherwise useful technique. Scholarship in general would be

greatly impoverished if it were restricted merely to narrating the specific details of particular cultures, without reference to any abstract, theoretical concepts or techniques not already in use within those cultures. In Indian classical music, there is, furthermore, already a long tradition of notating musical compositions by writing down their scale-degrees in a form of *sol-fa* notation known as “*sārgam*”.

Transcribing music also has a number of practical advantages. It necessarily involves engaging with music in a detailed way, requiring the person transcribing to hear music analytically. I have frequently found that transcribing music has revealed important patterns which I would not have been able to identify by listening alone. Looking at transcriptions make the process of analysis far easier than simply listening to recordings; they make it possible to skim-read an entire performance, looking, for example, for large-scale structural features. They are useful for refreshing one’s memory of a performance heard some time ago. They also allow the scholar to pin-point key details at a glance, rather than having to spend many hours listening for them repeatedly.

In discussing the advantages and disadvantages of transcription by ear, a number of scholars (including Seeger 1958) have advocated using automatic, machine-produced graphs as an alternative, supposedly less subjective way of representing sound. However, although such graphs can display far greater accuracy in terms of pitch and the exact durations of notes, it would be a mistake to imagine that these are completely objective and not influenced by any scholarly agenda; like transcription by ear, they also focus on only certain musical characteristics (for example pitch), omitting others. In this case, the resulting transcriptions are influenced by the agenda of the scholar who developed the machine or software that does the transcribing.

I do not use any automatically produced transcriptions in this thesis. In general, machine-produced transcriptions tend to be more difficult to decipher than those produced by ear. Doing transcription by ear, in that it is analytical, often involves simplifying complex sound information in order to bring out salient points, resulting in visual representations that are easier to read than machine-produced graphs. The level of complexity that machine-produced transcriptions show goes far beyond what was necessary for the arguments I make in this thesis. Nevertheless, automated transcriptions have proved enlightening in other analytical work (see for example Leech-Wilkinson 2009); these techniques may well shed useful light on *ṭhumrī* in the future.

For the purposes of this thesis, I have transcribed all musical examples using a modified form of Western staff notation (explained in Appendix I). Alternatively, I could have chosen to transcribe performances in Indian “*sārgam*” notation, using letters to refer to scale degrees and

arranging them according to the subdivisions of the metrical cycle. This was the method which Bhatkhande famously used to notate North Indian classical compositions and it is frequently used in other notated collections of compositions. Using *sārgam* notation has the advantage of being intelligible to Indian classical musicians and Indian musicologists (and many expert listeners). However it is not instinctively intelligible to the vast majority of ethnomusicologists and music analysts. Furthermore, while it is a good means of transcribing the overall outline of melodies, it does not easily lend itself to representing the quick, ornamental details of performances and it is very badly suited to the representation of complex rhythms.³ Staff notation, on the other hand, has the advantage of being accessible to a wide variety of scholars of music and does not require any special expertise in North Indian classical music in order to be intelligible. Since my thesis engages with a number of issues in ethnomusicology and music analysis in general, I feel it is important that my music examples be able to be understood by scholars with no prior training in North Indian classical music. My use of very slightly modified staff notation here allows for a detailed transcription of the melodic and rhythmic details of particular recorded performances. Furthermore, using staff notation to transcribe North Indian classical music is already accepted practice amongst the majority of analysts of Indian classical music. While I use staff notation to transcribe particular music examples, I explain them where possible using *sārgam* scale degrees in the text of my thesis and I frequently annotate key features in the transcription with *sārgam* scale degrees. I hope that this will enable any readers not familiar with staff notation to notice the particular musical features that are pertinent to my analysis.

One drawback of my method relates to a problem which Bruno Nettl glosses as the “balance of thoroughness and elegance” (2005: 82-85). In attempting to represent sounds as fully as possible, a scholar can end up producing transcriptions that are cluttered and difficult to read, giving a misleading impression of what may have been a quite simple-sounding musical performance.

Figures 2.20, 2.21 and 2.22 are indicative of this problem. The intention of these transcriptions was to show instances of very similar sounding examples, but due to their different rhythmic placement in the metrical cycle, they look very different on the page. Their pitches and the relative lengths of those pitches are almost exactly the same each time, but different transcriptions of each extract seem to show very different musical events. There is no easy solution to this problem. One alternative way of transcribing this would have been to simplify the rhythmic information, or just to transcribe the pitches, which might more clearly illustrate

³ Recently, Nicolas Magriel has developed an approach in which *sārgam* notation is modified so as to be able to display far more of these types of details; his method is very promising, but it has not yet achieved common currency amongst musicians or scholars of Indian classical music and is not easily understood by anybody not already expert in Indian classical music.

the striking sonic similarity between these different extracts. However, I did not wish to transcribe these passages in a purposefully inaccurate way. Instead I hope that the reader will be able to notice the similarities by looking beyond the rhythmic complexity and focussing on the pitches transcribed. In addition I hope that listening to the relevant audio recordings should clarify the similarities between these different extracts.

At times I notate some very short, ornamental pitches as grace-notes. At other times I notate very short notes using the appropriate rhythmic values. In deciding whether or not to notate notes as grace-notes, I was also guided by own experiences as a singer and long-time listener of North Indian classical music; I attempted as far as possible to notate the music in the way that I perceived it. I did not adopt any particular hard-and-fast rules in this case; rather, I attempted merely to notate the music so as to produce transcriptions that were as clear and easy to read as possible.

As is conventional in the transcription of Indian classical music when using Western staff notation, I have transposed the pitches so that the middle tonic is written as middle C. Accidentals apply only to the notes that they are immediately beside. (They do not, for example, last until the end of the measure in which they appear.)

I decided to use temporary accidentals rather than key signatures to show the precise pitches that singers use. This has the unfortunate effect of naturalising the Western major scale, so that any deviations from this scale are marked for attention with accidentals and may come to seem unusual or in need of resolution. In many cases in *ṭhumrī*, it is in fact the notes which do not have accidentals which constitute the temporary deviations from the *rāg*, while the notes with accidentals are the ones that resolve them. In *rāg bhairavi*, for example, the second scale degree is normally flattened and is therefore shown with an accidental. The singer might choose temporarily to raise this second degree. In this case, the “natural version” of the scale degree is in fact the deviation from the *rāg*, even though it appears without an accidental.

Despite this potentially misleading situation, using key signatures to show the scale degrees that are “in the *rāg*” has its own problems. In many semi-classical *rāgs*, two versions of a scale degree are both considered “in the *rāg*”. In *rāg khamāj*, for example, both the natural and the flattened version of *Ni*, the seventh scale degree, are equally a part of the *rāg*; the version which the singer uses will depend merely on whether it occurs in an ascending or a descending phrase. By using only accidentals and not key signatures, I avoid having to choose for the purpose of a key signature which of two possible versions of a scale degree to call “natural”. In addition, using accidentals reflects naming practices amongst musicians, who themselves take the notes of the Western major scale as natural or *śuddh*, with special terminology for flattened (*komal*) or sharpened (*tivra*) versions of scale degrees, even when they are “in the *rāg*” being performed.

I have shown the metrical cycle, or *tāl*, using bar-lines and rehearsal letters. Each rehearsal letter indicates the position of the *sam*, the first beat of the metrical cycle. Each cycle then consists of a number of *vibhāgs*, which I have shown here as measures. Each *vibhāg* contains a number of *mātrās* or beats, which I have shown as crotchets.

When referring to particular *vibhāgs* in the text, I use a combination of rehearsal letters and numbers. The first *vibhāg* of the first *āvart* (full cycle) becomes A:1, the second A:2, and so on. The first *vibhāg* of the second *āvart* would then be B:1. Once all the letters of the alphabet have been used once, I then label cycles A1, B1 and so on; thus the third *vibhāg* or the twenty-seventh *āvart* is labelled A1:3.

Transcribing the rhythmic features of un-metered music poses particular challenges in any notation system. In a number of instances, it has been necessary here to transcribe the introductory *ālāp* sections of *thumrī* performances. In line with the approach adopted by other scholars of North Indian classical music (for example Sanyal and Widdess 2004), I have transcribed these un-metered sections on the (Western) staff, using the horizontal axis of the staff to represent the precise passage of time, roughly positioning note-heads according to how long they last.

In all of the extracts here, I transcribed only the music performed by the solo singer, and not anything performed by other singers or by the accompanying instrumentalists. Transcribing these other elements of the performance may well have proved valuable: as well as giving a more complete picture of the performance, it is likely that some of the soloists' musical decisions would be influenced by what they hear from the other musicians on stage. The music of the accompanying artists is also interesting in its own right (see Napier 2007). However the study of accompaniment in *thumrī*, although surely worthy of attention, lies beyond the scope of this thesis; here I have chosen to focus on the soloists, on the way they construct their performances, on the musical decisions they make and on the social and other issues they face.

My decision not to include the accompanying instruments also had practical grounds. Given the enormous amount of time it takes to transcribe recordings, it was necessary to prioritise how to spend this time. I felt it was more important to transcribe a larger number of recordings of vocalists than to focus on many fewer performances but to include the accompaniment. In any case, the accompaniment can be heard by listening to the relevant music examples.

I have used the music notation programme Sibelius to produce all of the music examples transcribed here. In order to aid the process of transcription, I played recordings using the software Transcribe!, which is an indispensable and user-friendly programme that allows the user to slow down, loop and annotate sections of audio tracks, amongst other things.

Thesis aims and summary

The key questions I address in this thesis fall into two groups. The first set of questions concern the stylistic characteristics of *ṭhumrī* in the second half of the twentieth century and the early years of the twenty-first century. They include the following kinds of questions: What are the key characteristics of *ṭhumrī* style during this period? Why has *ṭhumrī* developed these characteristics? How and why do the musical styles of individual singers differ from each other? I seek to identify and account for these characteristics in different ways throughout the thesis. Amongst other things, this leads me to examine how musicians craft their *ṭhumrī* renditions in performance; I address the nature of musical improvisation in *ṭhumrī*, asking how it is that *ṭhumrī* singers are able to generate complex musical utterances on the spur of the moment and how processes of improvisation might leave their trace on *ṭhumrī*'s musical style. I also consider how social and other “external” factors have an impact on *ṭhumrī* style and attempt to uncover some of the meanings which *ṭhumrī*'s stylistic features evoke for its performers and listeners.

The second set of questions I consider in this thesis concern analytical methodology. Exploring different ways of analysing *ṭhumrī*, I ask how an analyst might best make sense of this complex musical genre. In doing so, I contribute to a small but growing body of work on the analysis of North Indian classical music, a musical tradition which has been analysed far less than Western classical music. Taking different approaches to *ṭhumrī* in each chapter allows me to view the genre from a variety of angles. Eventually I argue that this multifaceted analytical style itself is the best way of analysing *ṭhumrī*, giving a more complete picture of the genre than any one approach alone. I also advocate doing analysis “in context”, bringing together the transcription and analysis of recordings with ethnographic fieldwork. I treat music not as abstract sound but as collections of socially meaningful units. This allows me to explore multiple relationships between musical sound and the social, historical and economic contexts in which it occurs.

In Chapter 2, I lay the groundwork for my analysis throughout the thesis by considering the structural building blocks of *ṭhumrī* performances. I focus on the repeated musical formulas that appear in *ṭhumrī* performances. These consist of different types of recurring musical material; my analysis has revealed a large number of such formulas in *ṭhumrī* recordings by a wide variety of musicians from throughout the twentieth century. I propose ways of understanding how and why they occur in *ṭhumrī* and suggest ways of taking them into account in an analysis of *ṭhumrī* style. In the first sections, I consider the nature of improvisation in North Indian classical music and begin to explore the significance of musical formulas in *ṭhumrī*. Attempting to account for their widespread occurrence, I argue that they are a result of the way in which North Indian classical musicians teach, learn and practise *ṭhumrī*, in preparation for extempore performances. I explore wider contexts in which to make sense of formulas in North Indian classical music, drawing attention to parallels with the formulas that appear in other musical

traditions, oral poetry and spoken language. I then take the formulas of *ṭhumrī* as a starting point for an analysis of *ṭhumrī* style. Categorising these formulas into different types, I distinguish, for example, between the precise repetition of memorised musical figures and the repeated use of abstract musical strategies, which produce very different sounding musical phrases whenever they appear. I also consider the role that formulas play in delineating phrase structure and creating a sense of musical syntax.

After analysing *ṭhumrī*'s structural building blocks in Chapter 2, in Chapter 3 I consider how those building blocks come to carry meaning for musicians and listeners of North Indian classical music, by applying theories of semiotics to *ṭhumrī*. I discuss a variety of theories of semiotics and musical semiotics, assessing their potential to shed light on North Indian classical music. I propose that certain musical features of *ṭhumrī* carry specific extra-musical connotations for knowledgeable, "insider" listeners and I suggest thinking about these shared musical associations in terms of signs. I draw attention to three types of musical signs in *ṭhumrī*: 1) word-painting, in which musical features reference the physical world described by the lyrics; 2) a specific, named musical technique (*pukār*), identified widely by both musicians and connoisseurs as carrying particular emotional connotations; and 3) other musical features for which there exists no special insider terminology, but which musicians nevertheless identify as carrying emotional and other connotations. In setting up the idea that musical features can carry "extra-musical" connotations, this chapter provides the groundwork for the next, which looks at music's social significance.

In Chapter 4, I explore some of the complex relationships that exist between *ṭhumrī* styles, what musicians and connoisseurs say about *ṭhumrī* styles and the social world in which they are embedded. I highlight a number of overlapping themes in the discourse surrounding *ṭhumrī* and examine the ways in which musicians utilise these discursive themes in crafting social strategies, aimed at increasing their own prestige and popularity and that of the music that they perform. This is based on data obtained in interviews as well as a variety of written sources, including newspaper articles and other literature on music and musicians. Bringing together this data with my analysis of *ṭhumrī* recordings, I look at the extent to which musicians' stylistic choices operate in tandem with their rhetorical strategies, suggesting that features of the music itself, alongside language, can play strategic social roles. This includes an examination of arguments made about the classicality of *ṭhumrī*, its devotional nature, its emotional and expressive characteristics and its history. I argue that *ṭhumrī* style in the second half of the twentieth century is characterised by a multiplicity of different stylistic approaches, resulting in part from *ṭhumrī* singers' multiple social agendas and the different social strategies they adopt. Finally I look in detail at the strategic rhetorical and musical decisions made by one musician,

the singer Girija Devi, considering how they produce some of the unique characteristics of her *ṭhumrī* style.

In Chapter 5 I continue to analyse *ṭhumrī* in relation to social and cultural factors. Here I focus on relationships between the musical characteristics of *ṭhumrī* and the social construction of gender. I open with a general discussion of gender in North Indian classical music. I then examine the gendered connotations of *ṭhumrī* specifically, looking at descriptions of the genre by a variety of musicians and musicologists and examining the gendered connotations of specific musical features. I then present a detailed analysis of Sunanda Sharma's recording of the *ṭhumrī*, "*He mā kārī badariyā barase*" and of her comments when we listened to it together. Here I consider how gender norms might be implicated in the ways in which listeners experience *ṭhumrī* in performance. I argue that *ṭhumrī*'s musical resources contribute to the evocation of various, overlapping, types of femininity, all situated in a particular cultural context. I conclude with a discussion of how performing and listening practices might contribute to the ongoing production of culturally-situated gendered subjects and gendered subjectivities.

CHAPTER TWO

Formulas and the building blocks of *thumrī* style

Improvisation, structure and formulas in North Indian classical music

Musicians, musicologists and teenage backpackers alike speak of “improvisation” in modern-day Indian classical music.⁴ Musicians use the term to draw attention to differences between different portions of a performance, distinguishing between the “composition” of a particular performance (in vocal music, a short melody, setting a couple of lines of lyrics) and the rest of the performance, which involves musical material that is different in each performance and that musicians often claim to have made up on the spur of the moment.⁵ In their article, “Improvisation in Iranian and Indian music”, Richard Widdess and Laudan Nooshin draw attention to modern-day Indian terminology which reflects a conceptual distinction between improvised and pre-composed sections of a performance (2006: 2-4). The concept of improvisation has also been central to Western imaginings of North Indian classical music in the twentieth century. John Napier has discussed the long history of Western descriptions of Indian music as “improvised” or “extemporised”, which he traces back to the work of Fox Strangways in 1914. He points out the importance the concept took on, for example, in the way in which Indian music was introduced to mainstream Western audiences in the 1960s; he notes that the belief that the performance of Indian music constituted an improvised, meditative act allowed Indian music to become “a metaphor for a particular kind of psychic or spiritual freedom” (2006: 3).

The term “improvisation” evokes ideas of spontaneity and freedom; it would seem antithetical to the idea of a carefully worked-out and pre-planned structure. These connotations, however, are potentially misleading when the term is used in an Indian classical context.⁶ In contrast with the idea of whimsical freedom that the word “improvisation” evokes, a number of scholars have drawn attention to ways in which performances of North Indian classical music are in fact highly structured. John Napier, for example, is critical of some of the “misunderstandings” that arise from Western audiences’ impressions of North Indian classical music as improvised. He is

⁴ A version of this chapter has appeared in *Analytical Approaches to World Music* (2012) as “Formulas and the Building Blocks of *Thumrī* Style – A Study in “Improvised” Music”.

⁵ The relationship between those parts of the performance that musicians label the “composition” and the rest of the performance is actually slightly more complicated than this; throughout, a performance of North Indian classical music is normally punctuated by a refrain, or *mukhrā*, which is a part of the composition. Even apparently improvised parts of the performance may also make extensive use of material that is derived from the composition.

⁶ It is not only in studies of North Indian classical music that scholars have pointed to the problems inherent in the use of the concept of “improvisation” to make sense of different types of music. Bruno Nettl (1974) has critiqued the conventional opposition between composition and improvisation, suggesting that the two concepts would better be modelled as opposite poles of a spectrum, on which most musical traditions sit somewhere in the middle, involving a combination of pre-planned and spontaneous musical events. Moreover, Laudan Nooshin (2003) has discussed the political implications of the discursive distinction between improvisation and composition, suggesting ways in which it is informed by a Western, orientalist ideology.

suspicious of what he calls a “crude racialisation”, which, he feels, leads some to view Indian music as “structurally deficient”. In contrast with this view, borrowing terminology from Martin Clayton (2000: 25, 93-112), Napier notes a process of intensification in North Indian classical music; this structures performances such that they normally start slowly and in a low register, becoming increasingly fast, complex and exploring ever higher pitches as the performance progresses (2006: 5). Similarly, in their discussion of improvisation in Indian music, Widdess and Nooshin have drawn attention to “fundamental processes of development” and “compositional principles” that structure North Indian classical music (7-8). One of these is *vistār*, a structural principle which occurs throughout North Indian classical music. *Vistār* is one part of Napier’s “intensification” and is the process in which musicians gradually introduce the *rāg* of the performance to their audiences, by focusing on successively higher (and sometimes lower) pitches in turn (2006: 7).⁷

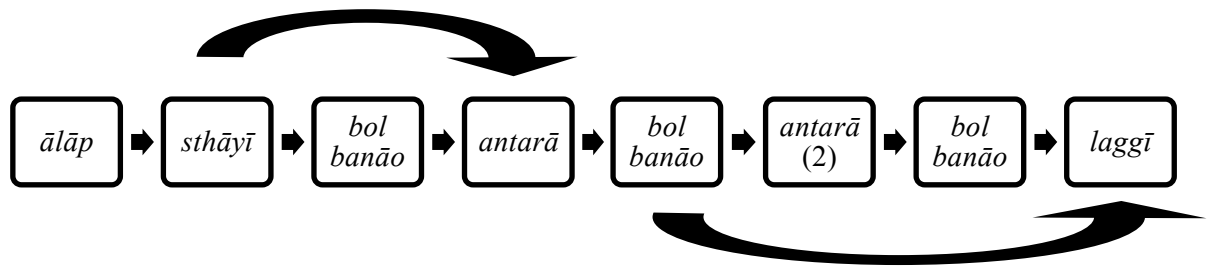
Elsewhere, Widdess draws upon theories of cognitive schemas in order to make sense of how some of these “compositional principles” operate in North Indian classical music (2011). A schema is a memory structure. In a discussion of schemas and music in his book *Music and Memory*, Bob Snyder defines it as follows: ‘When a number of different situations occurring at different times seem to have aspects in common, they are eventually averaged together into an abstract memory framework... Built up out of the commonalities shared by different experiences, these frameworks are referred to as “schemas”’ (2000: 95). Cognitive psychologists suggest that schemas operate widely in our everyday lives, acting as scripts to generate typical patterns of behaviour in familiar situations. Noting that schema theory has been useful in accounting for features observed in the analysis of various types of music, Widdess discusses schemas in North Indian classical music in particular. He focuses his analysis on one *ālāp* performance by the sitarist Budhaditya Mukherjee. There, he identifies what he calls “pitch schemas”, which he defines as “the static, quasi-spatial, hierarchical relationships among a group of defined pitches (such as a scale)” and “contour schemas”, which he defines as “a temporal sequence of pitches underlying, and repeatedly embellished or varied in, a group of melodic phrases” (2011: 194). He also notes that the process of *vistār* itself is a schema (206-7).

As a semi-classical genre (as opposed to the fully classical genres *khyāl* and *dhrupad*), *thumrī* is not bound by the strict rules concerning *rāg* that apply to its classical counterparts. Rather, musicians often talk about the flexibility and freedom permitted in the genre. Nevertheless,

⁷ When I was learning to sing Indian classical music, this overall pattern would inform not only the pieces my teacher taught me, but even the way she structured my lessons. We would start with long, slow exercises focussing on S, then explore lower register, and then start a series of exercises which reached ever higher notes while increasing in speed and complexity. By learning in this way, this overall structural progression came to seem perfectly natural to me.

many of the schemas and “compositional principles” that Widdess identifies in classical genres also operate in the semi-classical *ṭhumrī*. *Vistār*, for example, informs the development of most *ṭhumrī* performances, though it occurs in a less explicit way than in *ālāps* such as the one that Widdess analyses. In *ṭhumrī*, *vistār* is usually telescoped so as to occur relatively quickly, it rarely involves any exploration of the register below S and it sometimes does not structure the whole performance, instead only featuring in certain sections. (I discuss the ways in which *vistār* occurs in *ṭhumrī* in more depth in Chapter 4.) In addition, *ṭhumrī* performances are structured by a large-scale formal schema, which dictates the order of musical events in a *ṭhumrī* performance. Figure 2.1 is a summary of *ṭhumrī*’s overall form, showing the different structural options available to performers. In a performance of *ṭhumrī*, the performer might follow the arrows along any possible course. This diagram indicates the flexibility inherent in schematic organisation: certain events may be missed out, while others may be repeated, extended or shortened.⁸ In addition to these two large-scale schemas, other pre-existing constraints on performances of *ṭhumrī* include the composition, which is a pre-existing melody, the typical style of ornamentation expected in the genre and the *rāg* and *tāl* of the performance.

Figure 2.1, the structure of a *ṭhumrī* performance.



Glossary of terms

Ālāp – An unmetred introductory passage, concluding when the *tablā* enters.

Sthāyī – The first line of the composition, consisting of a set of lyrics and an approximate melodic outline.

Bol banāo – Passages which use the words of the composition in various melodic settings, designed to reveal the emotional nuances inherent in each phrase.

Antarā – A subsequent line of the composition, whose melody often explores the register surrounding the upper tonic.

Laggī – A faster passage in which the *tablā* often takes on a solo role.

⁸ Occasionally *ṭhumrī* performances diverge from the schema shown in figure 2.1, as in the case of the increasingly rare practice of singing multiple *laggīs* in a single *ṭhumrī* performance, punctuating passages of *bol banāo*. Nevertheless this schema represents the vast majority of contemporary *ṭhumrī* performances.

It is not only in their use of relatively fixed compositions and in the presence of large-scale structural principles that North Indian classical performances display evidence of advance planning. In addition to this, musicologists have also drawn attention to the large amount of memorised and rehearsed musical material that North Indian classical musicians use even in apparently improvised portions of their performances. Stephen Slawek, for instance, has described improvisation in North Indian classical music as a combination of memorised patterns, material based on pre-existing models and material produced by learned, generative “programs” (1998: 363). Widdess and Nooshin, too, have drawn attention to the frequent use of memorised musical material in Indian classical performances; they suggest that although musicians may not always create entirely new material on the spur of the moment throughout a performance, nevertheless spontaneity lies in “the decision to use a particular phrase or sequence of phrases at a given moment in the performance” (2006: 3). In *ṭhumrī* in particular, Peter Manuel has highlighted musicians’ repeated use of “favorite” musical phrases in different performances of *ṭhumrīs* in the same *rāg* (1989: 135-136). Napier (2006: 1), Wim van der Meer (1980: 143), Daniel Neuman (1980: 23) and Thom Lipiczky (1985) are amongst the variety of other scholars who have also highlighted this phenomenon in North Indian classical music.

In Slawek’s view, using memorised material offers musicians a way of meeting the requirement that they “keep it going” in performance: that is, that they continue to generate musical material at length, over the course of a performance that might last for some hours. Manuel makes a similar point about singers’ use of memorised phrases in performances of *ṭhumrī* in particular, writing that “it is essential that the vocalist has sufficient mastery and facility with these phrases, that they be at his fingertips, as it were, so that when he is actually concentrating on the musical sentiment of the text for inspiration, they emerge naturally, spontaneously, and with continuity and feeling” (1989: 140). Slawek draws a link between the use of memorised patterns in North Indian classical music and the means by which it is customarily learned and practised. He writes, “much of what occurs in a performance of Hindustānī music ... is actually “fixed” music (one might alternately say memorized) in the sense that the performer has practiced and rehearsed those exact melodic or rhythmic phrases hundreds, if not thousands, of times before” (1998: 336). Widdess and Nooshin, too, discuss the relationship between improvisation in North Indian classical music and the way in which it is learned: they note, for example, that the memorisation of relatively fixed musical material frequently plays a large role in being taught to perform North Indian classical music (2006: 109). My own experiences learning to sing North Indian classical music with the vocalist Sunanda Sharma confirm this.

My analysis has revealed a very large amount of formulaic musical material in *ṭhumrī* performances in the twentieth century. In this chapter, I will explore its significance from a music-analytical perspective. I will consider possible relationships between formulas in *ṭhumrī*

and those that appear in oral literature, everyday speech and other musical traditions and consider how theories developed in relation to formulas in these other domains may shed light on formulas in *ṭhumrī*. Based on my analysis of a large number of *ṭhumrī* recordings, I will then discuss the particular types of formulas that occur in *ṭhumrī* and examine how they operate in performance. I will argue that formulas are the building blocks of *ṭhumrī* and suggest that identifying the different types of formulas that occur in the genre offers a useful starting point for its analysis.

Formulas in music, oral literature and everyday speech

Formulas in improvised music

North Indian classical music is not the only seemingly improvised musical tradition in which musicians repeatedly make use of memorised musical formulas. Their presence is well-documented in improvisation in jazz, as is the practice of memorising solos as a way of learning how to improvise. In his book *Thinking in Jazz*, for example, Paul Berliner discusses the musical patterns that jazz musicians employ repeatedly in their improvisations. He writes that “many students begin acquiring an expansive collection of improvisational building blocks by extracting those shapes they perceive as discrete components from the larger solos they have already mastered and practicing them as independent figures” and that “they acquire others selectively by studying numerous performances of their idols” (1994: 101). Like Slawek in his description of North Indian classical music, Berliner highlights the role that memorised material plays in enabling musicians to generate solos on the spur of the moment: he notes that veteran improvisers will possess a “storehouse” or “vocabulary” of musical ideas, which “[provides] readily accessible material that meets the demands of composing music in performance.” He cites one of his informants, who laughed about the necessity of being able to turn to memorised material “when your mind is crippled and you can’t think of anything to play” (1994: 102).

In a cross-cultural study of musical improvisation, Aaron Berkowitz draws attention to the occurrence of musical formulas in a variety of musical traditions. Like Widdess and Nooshin, Slawek and Berliner, Berkowitz also links the presence of formulas in improvised music with the large amount of memorisation that is often involved in learning how to improvise. He characterises formulas as an aid to the performer who needs to produce complex musical performances on the spur of the moment. He writes that these musical patterns, once “internalized” and “automatized”, should be able to be “performed instantly and without preplanning” (2010: 42), giving the impression that the performer has “brains in the fingers” (2010: 37-38).

Formulas in oral literature

The first and most well-known discussions of formulas and their relationship with improvisation occurred in the field of linguistics and were concerned specifically with oral poetry. Early in the twentieth century, Milman Parry drew attention to formulas in Homeric epic poetry; he suggested that their presence indicated that this poetry originated in an oral poetic tradition (see his collected papers in Parry (1987)). His work, along with that of his student Albert Lord on still-performed Slavic oral epic poetry (1965), has been highly influential on scholars working subsequently on a variety of orally transmitted genres. Walter Ong, for example, draws on Parry's hypothesis in order to make a cross-cultural argument about the impact of the advent of writing on the development of societies over time. Writing of the differences between "orality" and "literacy", he highlights formulas as an example of one of the characteristics of oral traditions, contrasting them with written literature (1982).

More recently, the cognitive psychologist David Rubin has conducted an in-depth study of the relationship between memory and the characteristic structural features of performances in oral traditions (1995). As in Widdess' analysis of North Indian classical music, Rubin draws attention to the role of cognitive schemas in structuring performances: he suggests that it is through schemas that performers memorise and then generate performances in oral traditions. Rubin employs a variety of technical terms, some borrowed from other scholars, in order to distinguish between different types of schemas. One such type is a "script", a term which he takes from the work of Schank and Ableson (1977) and which he defines as "a predetermined, stereotyped sequence of actions that defines a well-known situation" (1995: 24). He draws attention to the presence of scripts in a number of oral traditions.

Drawing heavily on the work of Parry and Lord, Rubin also suggests that schema theory might account for the widespread presence of formulas in oral literature. Specifically, he argues that formulas are a result of the multiple, combining constraints that schemas produce in performance. In the case of oral poetry, for example, Rubin notes that large-scale structural schemas (such as the overall plot of the poem) constrain the performer, limiting the directions the performance may take. He also draws attention to other possible constraints in performance, including metre, rhyme and the conventional vocabulary from which the poet may draw. He points out that these multiple, simultaneous constraints severely limit the material that a performer might use. Formulas are tailor-made phrases which obey these constraints. They might consist, for example, of conventional, multi-word epithets, used in the description of particular characters, which also happen to fit appropriately in a particular part of a metrical cycle. The poet has a large repertoire of these formulas to hand and uses them as appropriate. The poet does not, therefore, have to create material that obeys all the necessary constraints entirely from scratch during the performance.

According to Rubin's theory, schemas can operate at different structural levels. As well as large-scale, global schemas which structure whole performances and medium-scale "scripts", which dictate the order of a well-known sequence of events, for example the events surrounding a hero's preparing his army for battle (1995: 24-28), Rubin also highlights the operation of schemas at a much smaller scale within performances, drawing attention to what he calls "surface schemas" (70-72). It is possible to think of formulas as an example of this more local type of patterning; according to this model, formulas are not only a result of the operation of schemas in performance (and the constraints they produce), but are also schemas themselves.

A number of scholars have drawn a connection between the performance of oral poetic traditions and improvisation in music. Leo Treitler, for example, suggests taking the theory of Parry and Lord about oral composition "as a paradigm" for the study of Gregorian plainchant, looking at ways in which notated plainchants (like notated Homeric epics) display evidence of a past tradition of oral transmission (1974). Like Rubin, he also draws upon cognitive psychology in order to support the view that formulas appear in the products of oral traditions as a result of the characteristics of human memory. Others have applied the work of Parry and Lord to the study of jazz improvisation. (See, for example, Smith 1983.) Berkowitz draws a general, cross-cultural comparison between improvised music and the performance of oral epic poetry, drawing particular attention to the role that formulas play in the transmission of non-notated traditions (2010: 27-28).⁹

North Indian classical music is, for the most part, transmitted orally. Its repertoire is stored in the memories of the musicians who perform it, not in written scores. Every piece is generated anew in each performance, such that the exact order of pitches and note-lengths used will never be the same in any two performances, even if they are of the same piece. Nevertheless, performances do conform to a number of rules and schemas, such as those associated with the *rāg* and *tāl* of the composition. Like performers of oral poetry, North Indian classical musicians are required to produce seemingly novel material at speed and on the spur of the moment, which nevertheless also obeys a variety of different structural and other constraints. Just as formulas in oral poetry would seem to be essential in enabling its performers to meet this requirement, so

⁹ Richard Widdess (2011 personal communication) has pointed out a difference of emphasis in some of these different studies of orality and music: while Treitler and Rubin are interested primarily in how people remember largely fixed oral texts, either verbal or musical, other scholars, including Parry/Lord and Berliner, focus instead on how people improvise partially new texts in performance. This is partly a result of the different subject matter they study. Treitler, for example, examines Gregorian chant, the melodies of which differ only very slightly between different written versions, implying that they must have been transmitted by almost total memorisation. Berliner, meanwhile, studies jazz improvisation, a tradition in which great value is attached to novelty and originality in performance. In these different studies, formulas and/or schemas would seem to play two different, albeit related, roles: first, to aid the recall of fixed texts and, second, to provide the means by which performers can generate long, seemingly improvised, texts on the spur of the moment. In both cases, the memorisation of formulaic chunks of material would seem to be crucial in facilitating successful performances.

the formulaic material that occurs in North Indian classical music would seem to offer a comparable way of meeting a comparable set of demands.

Formulas in everyday speech

Recent work in the field of linguistics has revealed ways in which everyday spoken language contains formulas similar to those in oral literature. Most of this work is indebted to Andrew Pawley and Frances Syder's 1983 book chapter, "Two puzzles for linguistic theory". They highlight the existence in conversational speech of what they call "sentence stems", which are a type of formulaic linguistic unit (specifically, a set of words which speakers use repeatedly as the bare bones of different sentences). They argue that the knowledge of a body of such units is necessary for "the fluent and idiomatic control of a language" (191). They propose that paying attention to sentence stems offers solutions to linguistic theory's apparent inability to account for how humans are able to "produce fluent multi-clause utterances" which "[exceed] human capacities for encoding novel speech in advance" (191) and for how native speakers are able to select native-sounding expressions from a range of possible, grammatically correct options.

Picking up on their ideas in his article "Improvisation, Creativity and Formulaic Language", Ian Mackenzie compares oral poetry and musical improvisation with the spontaneous generation of everyday speech, suggesting that similar processes are involved in all three areas. Just as Parry and Lord drew attention to the pervasive presence of formulas in oral poetry, Mackenzie writes that when we speak, "we routinely rely on a vast store of fixed, prepatterned phrases, which we use more often than we generate locutions entirely from scratch" (2000: 173). He critiques the Chomskyan idea that we generate sentences by taking individual words from our vocabulary and deploying them according to a set of learned grammatical rules; instead he suggests that our speech is primarily composed of memorised, pre-fabricated chunks of material, which we piece together in acts of communication. The basic units of language, he suggests, are not words, but groups of words. He cites examples of these: they include the idiomatic phrases "in a nutshell", "by the way", "for that matter", "what on earth" and "beside the point", as well as the expression "how do you do?" (174). Mackenzie suggests that we use these pre-fabricated chunks of material with flexibility. He describes them as "semi-fixed" and points out our capacity to create variations of familiar phrases and to combine and recombine learned expressions in imaginative ways (175).

Alison Wray has taken a detailed, multi-faceted approach to the analysis of formulaic language in her books *Formulaic Language and the Lexicon* (2002) and *Formulaic Language: Pushing the Boundaries* (2008). She has looked, for example, at formulaic language in child and adult language learning, its possible causes and origins, its role in humour and its relationship with thought, as well as many other issues. She is interested both in psychological and social reasons

why humans use formulaic language. Her arguments rest on the theory that “the mental lexicon is heteromorphic”: that is, that “linguistic material is stored in bundles of different sizes”, such that “the mental lexicon contains not only morphemes and words but also many multiword strings, including some that are partly lexicalized frames with slots for variable material” (2008: 12). She labels these linguistic units “Morpheme Equivalent Units” (MEUs) and suggests that these form the basis for the formulas that appear in spoken language.

Wray defines a MEU as “a word or word string ... that is processed like a morpheme, that is, without recourse to any form-meaning matching of any sub-parts it may have” (2008: 12). Amongst her examples of multiword strings are “‘true’ idioms – a set of ... particularly evocative multiword strings that express an idea metaphorically, such as ‘kick the bucket’, ‘red herring’, and ‘raining cats and dogs’”; “expressions that are metaphorical but, arguably, are less distant from the literal meaning than idioms, such as ‘set one’s store by’, ‘take stock’, ‘watch one’s back’”; “collocational associations, such as, in academic prose, ‘fully developed’ and ‘highly complex’” (2008: 10); and “partly-fixed frames”, which “have some fixed material along with slots that permit variation for other material”, including the frame “NP be-TENSE as ADJ_i as ADJ_i can be”, which can be realised variously as “the elephant was as big as big can be”, “a flea is as small as small can be”, and “that tortoise will be as slow as slow can be” (2008: 16).

Wray proposes that the way in which linguistic units enter the mental lexicon is determined by a default strategy which she labels “Needs Only Analysis” (NOA). According to this strategy, linguistic material enters the lexicon of the native speaker as it is heard, and is analysed into smaller chunks only in response to particular, real-world needs. Wray writes, “The process of analysis which the [native speaker] child engages in [is] not that of breaking down as much linguistic material as possible into its smallest components. Rather, nothing [is] broken down unless there [is] a specific reason” (2002: 130, quoted in Wray 2008: 17). Accounting for this psychologically, she argues that there is a “premium on working memory capacity”, with the result that “it is advantageous during linguistic processing to avoid unnecessary real-time encoding and decoding” (2008: 69). The use of already-encoded MEUs (often multiword strings), then, minimises the processing required in order to speak, with the result that, of the range of possible grammatically correct ways of expressing an idea, only certain material becomes “privileged as idiomatic” (2008: 18).

Wray also offers a social explanation for what she calls “formulaicity” in language, writing that the NOA strategy offers “a linguistic solution to a non-linguistic problem, namely, the promotion of self” (2008: 69). She attributes the motivation for using MEUs partially to “the social pressure to speak like others, something that can be achieved by adopting the multiword patterns already in use in the speech community” (18). She also notes that the social and

psychological explanations she offers complement each other, since “MEUs are not only easier for the speaker to encode but also easier for a hearer with similar knowledge to decode”, allowing a speaker to “select MEUs as a means of directing the hearer to certain actions, beliefs, and feelings, ... controlling how hearers perceive the speaker” (2008: 69).

Wray offers a more sophisticated, nuanced explanation of the link between formulas and orality than that proposed by Parry, Lord and Ong. Rather than theorising formulas as a direct consequence of orality, she suggests a number of different factors which predict greater or lesser formulaicity in different types of language. While she suggests that a “written medium” and a “complex society” are indicators of low levels of formulaicity, high formulaicity is determined by combination of the following five factors: “(1) the appropriacy of a formula in expressing *exactly* the desired message”, meaning that a formula will be more likely to be used if “a novel [i.e. not formulaic] formulation cannot capture all aspects of the meaning of the formula”; “(2) the estimated likelihood of the hearer understanding the formula”; “(3) the desire on the part of the speaker to signal identity through language”, such that high formulaicity is more likely to occur if the “producer wants to express insider identity even if receivers are excluded”; “(4) local conditions affecting the processing demands on the speaker and hearer”, formulas being more likely, for example, if the “producer is under processing pressure”; and “(5) the specific desire to express the idea in a novel way”, formulas being more likely in those situations in which “the producer does not desire to be specifically novel in expression” (2008: 57). She spells out the link between formulas and oral media of communication as an indirect one, such that “the medium of expression facilitates, rather than determines, the differences between text types” (57-58).

Wray’s approach has a number of advantages over those of her predecessors. It is holistic, bringing together both social and psychological factors to explain the presence of formulas in language. Also, by complicating any ideas of a direct, causal link between formulas and orality, Wray’s theories can account for the presence of formulas in written literature and notated musical traditions and for differences in the extent and type of formulas that occur in different domains. Furthermore, Wray raises the possibility that formulas serve a purpose not only for the people who use them, for example by ameliorating the problems caused by the limitations of human memory, but also for the people who hear them. She points out that formulas play a role in establishing social boundaries that might include both a speaker and a listener, and that when a speaker uses a formula also familiar to the listener, it renders language more easily intelligible by that listener (2008: 20-21).¹⁰

¹⁰ Widdess makes a similar point in his discussion of “compositional principles” in North Indian classical music. He notes that their importance is not only “related ... to the performer’s need to recall memorised material and invent new material that is grammatical” but also “to the listener’s need to engage with, comprehend, and be stimulated by an auditory experience that ... happens in real

This chapter will suggest applying linguistic theories to music. The act of drawing comparisons between improvising and speaking is nothing new. Berkowitz, for example, explores connections between speech and musical improvisation at length, evoking a centuries-old tradition of using speech analogies to describe musical performance. He suggests that similar cognitive processes are involved in learning to improvise and learning to speak. He also explores other parallels between music and language, including in the way in which listeners experience them and in the cognitive processes involved during performance (2010: 97-118 and 145-152). Likewise I would like to suggest that the theories of formulas in language I highlighted above are highly applicable to the study of North Indian classical music. Pawley and Syder, along with Wray, point to the role that formulas play in reducing the cognitive processing required for encoding speech at speed; their descriptions are echoed in Slawek's assertion that formulas enable musicians to overcome the difficulties inherent in "keeping it going" in performance, that is, in continuing to generate large amounts of musical material on the spur of the moment (1998).

Comparisons with spoken language would seem to offer a particularly appropriate way of understanding *ṭhumrī*. When they talk about *ṭhumrī*, musicians often compare it with speech. When I was learning to sing *ṭhumrī*, my teacher, Sunanda Sharma, would sometimes congratulate me on singing "naturally, like speaking". Many singers insist that, in *ṭhumrī*, it is of the utmost importance to convey the lyrics clearly; they caution against singing any words out of order (something which is acceptable in other classical genres) in case the lyrics become obscured. In his book on *ṭhumrī*, Peter Manuel compares *ṭhumrī* with the classical genre *khyāl* noting that in *khyāl*, but not in *ṭhumrī*, "text delivery is often blurred, broken, and generally unintelligible," the emphasis of the performance being on "pure, abstract, melodic improvisation." Noting the far greater weight attached to conveying the words of a *ṭhumrī* performance, Manuel arranges the different genres of North Indian music on a spectrum, placing *ṭhumrī* somewhere in between the two antipodes of what he calls "text-dominated" genres and "music-dominated" ones (1989: 32-33). Even the very label applied to an improvised passage in *ṭhumrī* (*bol*) derives from the Hindi verb meaning "to speak" (*bolna*).

The arguments of Mackenzie and Wray concerning the link between formulas and language acquisition are also relevant to *ṭhumrī*. They both highlight the existence of linguistic formulas in order to advocate usage-based theories of language acquisition, which suggest that we learn to speak fluently in our mother tongue by first learning and repeating multi-word chunks of linguistic material verbatim, before we learn how to break them down, modify them and make up grammatical, idiomatic phrases on our own. This process parallels the way musicians learn

time" (2011: 188). He draws attention to the ways in which repeated musical patterns can generate listeners' expectations, allowing them to engage with a performance as it progresses over time.

to sing *ṭhumrī*. As a first step towards learning to create our own phrases of *bol banāo*, my teacher, for example, teaches her pupils first to memorise exactly the musical phrases she has created, then to break down and re-combine their component parts. On one occasion, early on in my musical training, my teacher had invited a *tablā* player to attend my singing lesson, so I could practice singing some of the phrases I had memorised to the sound of rhythmic accompaniment, providing the metre. One of the phrases she had taught me seemed too short, now the metre was made explicit by the *tablā* player: it did not fill enough of the metrical cycle, which meant that I had to leave a gap before singing the next section. Hearing this, my teacher told me to fill that gap with the end of a different phrase that I had recently memorised. After demonstrating how I might do this, she said, “*This* is improvisation.”

An in-depth, comparative study of formulas in music and language is beyond the scope of this study. However, in the analysis I present in the next section, I will consider various ways in which theories of formulas in speech can usefully be applied to the analysis of *ṭhumrī* style. In particular, I will draw on concepts and terminology from work by Wray and Mackenzie in order to make sense of some of the features I identify in *ṭhumrī*.

Formulas and schemas in Western classical music

In his *Music in the Galant Style* (2007), Robert Gjerdingen identifies a large number of repeating musical patterns in eighteenth-century Western classical music. Although the music he studies is the product of a notated musical tradition, these musical patterns nevertheless have a great deal in common with the formulas of oral traditions. Gjerdingen uses schema theory to make sense of his observations and labels the patterns he finds not “formulas”, but “schemata”.¹¹

Gjerdingen explains their presence in part by noting the improvisatory nature of much *galant* music. He compares music with performance of the contemporary *Commedia Dell’Arte*, suggesting that musical schemas are the musical corollaries of the stock expressions used in this improvised theatrical tradition (8-9). He draws attention to the improvisatory nature of eighteenth-century musical performance, such that “[the score] often provided only a bare notation of the sequence of schemata, with the graces, ornaments, and elegant variation left to the skilled performer” (9-10). He points out that many musicians of the time were capable of improvising pieces on the spur of the moment. He mentions one documented instance in which two musicians jointly and simultaneously improvised a performance: he attributes this to their ability to “[connect] a string of well-learned musical schemata to form a seemingly spontaneous

¹¹ Gjerdingen uses the Greek plural “schemata” in preference to the Anglicised “schemas”. Throughout this study, however, I use “schemas” and “formulas” (not “schemata” and “formulae”) in line with current practice in work by cognitive psychologists on schema theory and work by Wray and others on formulaic language.

and continuous musical performance” (10). Learning these schemas was a standard part of a *galant* musician’s training: Gjerdingen notes that students of music commonly made use of *zibaldoni*, notebooks of “exercises and rules”, which “provided an important repository of stock musical business from which a young composer could later draw” (10). Even the act of composing *galant* music in a notated score often involved the kind of spur-of-the-moment musical thinking more normally associated with improvisation, as a result of the economic environment of eighteenth-century music production, in which composers had to produce large amounts of music at speed. In this context he notes the “obvious advantages” for composers of having a stockpile of memorised musical schemas, from which to put together their compositions (51). Additionally Gjerdingen points to other, social factors to account for the widespread presence of schemas in *galant* music; he associates them with courtly etiquette, comparing codes of musical schemas with the highly codified sets of gestures and manners that were required of those who wished to participate in contemporary courtly society.

Gjerdingen’s study is grounded in musical analysis. Based on his examination of work by a variety of eighteenth-century composers, he highlights and labels some of the most common schemas of *galant* music. Throughout his work, he shows how these musical patterns play out in specific compositions. He offers a highly flexible model of the functioning of schemas in music, showing ways in which they can be broken up, recombined, varied or made to overlap in individual compositions.

In my analysis of *ṭhumrī*, I adopt elements of Gjerdingen’s methodology in order to examine the musical formulas that occur there. Like Gjerdingen, I attempt to identify and distinguish different types of musical patterns and consider how they are deployed in specific performances. In the next section, I will show ways in which *ṭhumrī* performances, like *galant* compositions, are largely made up of recurring musical patterns, which interact at different structural levels to produce a complex patchwork of musical events.

Musical patterns and the analysis of *ṭhumrī* performances

My analysis of *ṭhumrī* performances by a number of musicians has revealed the widespread presence of a variety of different types of recurring musical material and patterns. This section will explore ways of analysing and categorising these musical phenomena and will consider how they might be taken into account when analysing *ṭhumrī* style more generally.

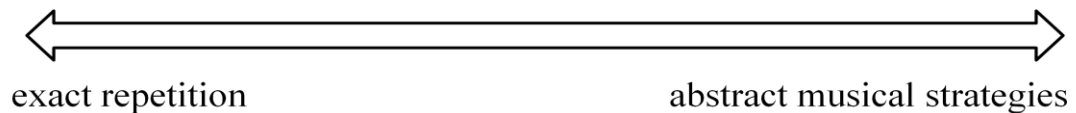
In her publications, Wray devotes significant space to a discussion of the problems inherent in trying to define “formulaic language” (see for example 2008: 9-11). She notes that there are many different types of linguistic patterning that might be contenders for the label “formulaic”

and whose occurrence might be explained in a variety of ways. She takes the strategic decision to commence her study with as broad a definition of “formulaic” as possible (2008: 4). In my study of musical patterns in *ṭhumrī*, I adopt a similar approach, taking a broad view of what might eventually turn out to be separate, discrete phenomena in order to look at as many aspects of *ṭhumrī*’s internal structure as possible. I consider ways of categorising the different types of musical patterning found in *ṭhumrī* performances. For purposes of this study, a formula will be defined as any musical pattern which occurs repeatedly in *ṭhumrī* performances.

Exact repetition or abstract strategies? Categorising formulas in ṭhumrī

As a first stage in this analytical project, I would like to consider ways of differentiating the different types of musical patterning found in *ṭhumrī* performances. I suggest that it might be helpful to think about recurring musical patterns as lying on a spectrum, varying according to the degree of flexibility with which they are repeated, such that the exact repetition of chunks of musical material occupies one end and the recurring use of abstract, generational musical strategies occupies the other. I have highlighted four points along that spectrum, so that the precise repetition of what I call “stock expressions” is seen as one extreme, the non-exact repetition of what I label “variable outlines” and “musical gestures” lies somewhere in the middle of the spectrum and recurrence of abstract musical “strategies” lies at the other extreme (see figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2, different types of recurring musical patters in *ṭhumrī*.



“stock expressions” “variable outlines” “gestures” “strategies”

It is worth noting that this method of differentiating types of musical patterning is not based on the nature of the material itself, but on the way it is used. While some chunks of musical material might be repeated exactly, others might be treated flexibly on repetition, and yet others else might reveal an underlying abstract strategy. Furthermore, the same chunk of material might operate in all three ways.

Drawing on a cognitive theoretical model suggested by Jeff Pressing, Berkowitz draws a distinction between “musical ‘objects’ that must be committed to memory so that they can be produced spontaneously when improvising” and “musical ‘processes’ that must be learned and rehearsed so that they can be used to develop formulas in improvised performance” (2010: 40). Berkowitz classes the formulas he refers to as examples of musical objects; meanwhile, he cites “transposition, variation and recombination” as examples of musical processes. Similarly, Wray

distinguishes in language between the store of linguistic units that make up the mental lexicon and the knowledge of “the principles by which they combine” (2008: 89).

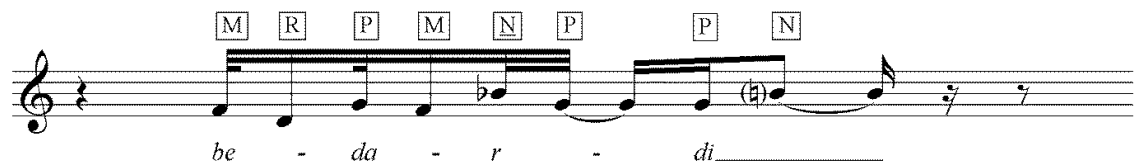
I would like to suggest that the equivalents in my model of Pressing’s musical objects are what I label “stock expressions”, while my “strategies” are examples of musical processes. Some of the strategies I identify in *ṭhumrī* are in fact the same processes that Berkowitz identifies in Western classical music and jazz. However, unlike Berkowitz, I choose to assign the label “formula” to both objects and processes. My analysis of the types of musical patterns that recur in *ṭhumrī* suggests that, in this case, it is better to consider repeated musical objects and repeated musical processes as representing opposite poles of a spectrum than to suggest an absolute, qualitative distinction between these different types of musical patterns. In the analysis that follows, I will draw attention to types of recurring musical patterns that blur the boundary between object and process. I would like to suggest that, in the case of *ṭhumrī* at least, the distinction between musical objects and musical processes is not clear-cut.

Stock expressions

On the far left hand of the spectrum in figure 2.2, I have identified what I have called stock expressions: often very short chunks of material, these are repeated exactly or nearly exactly. Figures 2.3 and 2.4 show two renditions of the word “*bedardī*” from a performance of the *ṭhumrī* “*Bedardi balama*” by Girija Devi: these provide a good example of the recycling of short segments of musical material within a single performance. The principal difference between these two is the addition of in the second example.¹²

Figure 2.3, extract from Devi (1993a), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Pīlū*, 05:23 to 05:28.

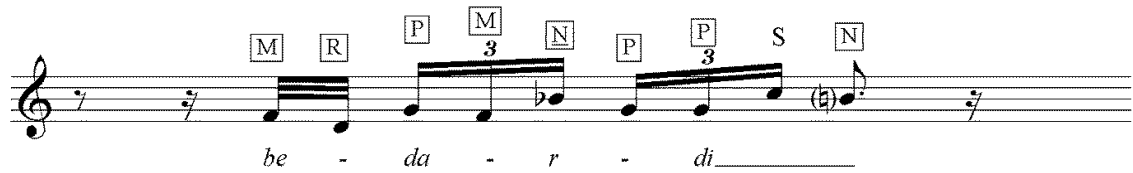
Tāl = 16-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A. See CD 1, track 1.



¹² See Appendix I for an explanation of the notational conventions of North Indian classical music, covering both the use of letters to represent scale degrees and the use of Western staff notation.

Figure 2.4, extract from Devi (1993a), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Pīlū*, 07:29 to 07:34.

Tāl = 16-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A. See CD 1, track 2.



Figures 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8 and 2.9 display another example of a stock expression; this time, it is in a performance by Rasoolan Bai (2007)¹³ and consists of a distinctive melodic pattern that always sets the end of the word “*sāvariā*”. (It is marked with brackets above the staff.)

Figure 2.5, extract from Rasoolan Bai (2007), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Bhairavī*, 07:07 to 07:14.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ G. See CD 1, track 3.

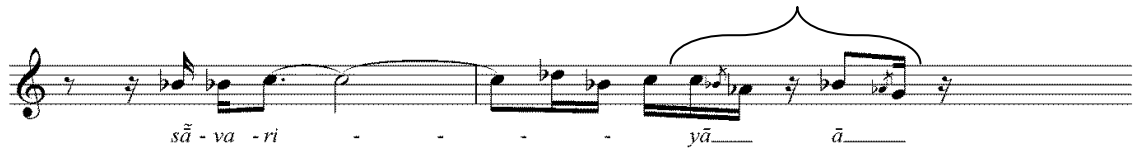


Figure 2.6, extract from Rasoolan Bai (2007), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Bhairavī*, 07:59 to 08:03.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ G. See CD 1, track 4.

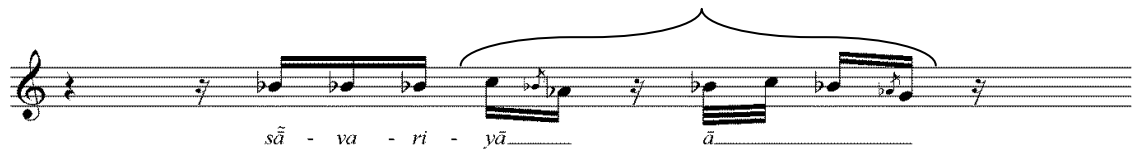


Figure 2.7, extract from Rasoolan Bai (2007), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Bhairavī*, 08:06 to 08:11.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ G. See CD 1, track 5.



¹³ Most CDs of North Indian classical music do not provide any information about the original dates of the performances they contain. In order to identify recordings here, I have used the release date of the relevant CD. This should not be taken as evidence of the age of the actual recordings. In many cases, as in this example, the CDs were released several decades after the performers had died. Where supplied, I have put original recording dates in square brackets, alongside the CD release date; however, it was only very rarely possible to supply this information. (Very rarely, CDs displayed the date of the original recording but had no release date: in these cases, I have used the original recording date given.)

Figure 2.8, extract from Rasoolan Bai (2007), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Bhairavī*, 08:59 to 09:06.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ G. See CD 1, track 6.

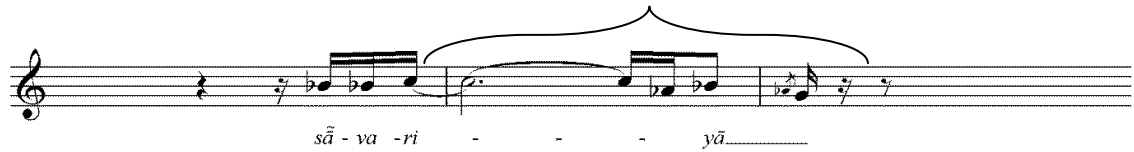


Figure 2.9, extract from Rasoolan Bai (2007), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Bhairavī*, 09:10 to 09:14.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ G. See CD 1, track 7.



Figures 2.10, 2.11, 2.12 and 2.13 show extracts from a *ṭhumrī* performance by Bhimsen Joshi (2002a); these feature another stock expression. Here, the underlying schema consists of four elements: 1) an optional lead-in, including the pitches N and or ; 2) a pause on ; 3) an oscillation between N and ; and 4) a quick figure using the pitches NPMGMP N . Note in these examples that the melodic material remains nearly exactly the same on each rendition, while the lyrics change. Joshi also sings another rendition of this formula in the un-texted *ālāp* section at the start of this performance.

Figure 2.10, extract from Joshi (2002a), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Tila g*, 06:00 to 06:09.

Tāl = *tīntāl*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ C#. See CD 1, track 8.



Figure 2.11, extract from Joshi (2002a), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Tila g*, 06:56 to 07:02.

Tāl = *tīntāl*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ C#. See CD 1, track 9.



Figure 2.12, extract from Joshi (2002a), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Tīlā g*, 08:43 to 08:51.

Tāl = *tīntāl*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ C#. See CD 1, track 10.



Figure 2.13, extract from Joshi (2002a), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Tīlā g*, 14:08 to 14:12.

Tāl = *tīntāl*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ C#. See CD 1, track 11.



Sometimes singers re-use musical material in two separate performances of the same composition: this can be seen in figures 2.14 and 2.15, which show extracts from two different performances of the *ṭhumrī* “*Kaise likhū patiyā*” (Devi 2001a and Devi 2002). Figures 2.16, 2.17, 2.18 and 2.19 show a similar figure; this time, they occur in her performance of a different composition, also in *rāg Pīlū* (Devi 1993a). With the exception of figure 2.17, which is a shorter fragment, all of these passages contain the pitches *PDMDPDMG*.

Figure 2.14, extract from Devi (2001a), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Pīlū*, 04:22 to 04:30.

Tāl = 16-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ C#. See CD 1, track 12.

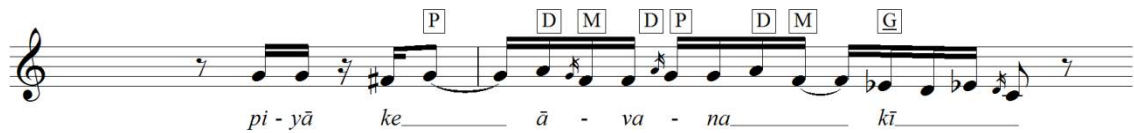


Figure 2.15, extract from Devi (2002), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Pīlū*, 05:44 to 05:54.

Tāl = 16-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ D. See CD 1, track 13.



Figure 2.16, extract from Devi (1993a), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Pīlū*, 02:38 to 02:53.

Tāl = 16-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A. See CD 1, track 14.



Figure 2.17, extract from Devi (1993a), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Pīlū*, 02:55 to 03:02.

Tāl = 16-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A. See CD 1, track 15.



Figure 2.18, extract from Devi (1993a), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Pīlū*, 03:15 to 03:22.

Tāl = 16-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A. See CD 1, track 16.

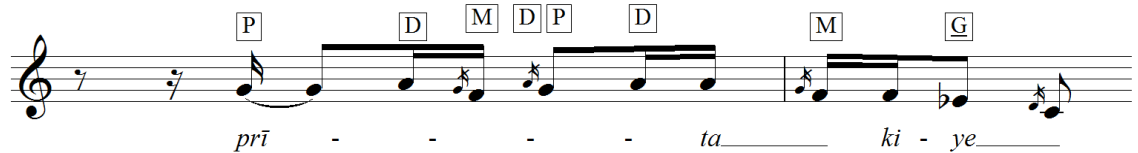


Figure 2.19, extract from Devi (1993a), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Pīlū*, 03:56 to 04:08.

Tāl = 16-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A. See CD 1, track 17.



My analysis has revealed an enormous number of instances, like these, in which short chunks of melodic material crop up repeatedly in *ṭhumrī* performances. Sometimes, as in the first example, this happens within a single performance; sometimes, in two performances of the same composition by the same singer; and sometimes, in performances that appear to have little else in common. I would like to suggest that these are akin to the memorised “licks” of jazz performance, the stock phrases of epic poetry and the multi-word chunks that Mackenzie identifies in everyday speech. Already memorised and possibly also even rehearsed, musicians

can use them at appropriate points in their *ṭhumrī* performances: they are some of the basic units of musicians' vocabularies.

Variable melodic outlines

Instances of repetition in *ṭhumrī* do not always involve short, isolated chunks such as these; sometimes significantly longer passages are repeated, too. Note the striking similarity of the extracts in figures 2.20, 2.21 and 2.22, from a single *ṭhumrī* performance by Purnima Chaudhuri.

Figure 2.20, extract from Chaudhuri (1996), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Khamāj*, 0:32 to 0:47.

Tāl = 16-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ G#. See CD 1, track 18.



Figure 2.21, extract from Chaudhuri (1996), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Khamāj*, 06:49 to 07:03.

Tāl = 16-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ G#. See CD 1, track 19.



Figure 2.22, extract from Chaudhuri (1996), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Khamāj*, 07:35 to 07:46.

Tāl = 16-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ G#. See CD 1, track 20.



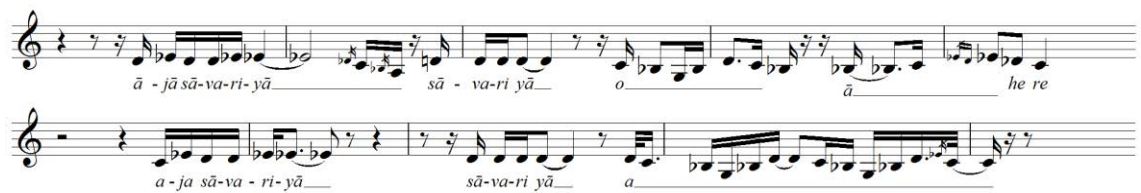
This almost precise repetition of a longer passage is unusual; while a number of singers frequently repeat shorter chunks of melodic material verbatim, longer passages are more normally repeated with greater flexibility than is evident in this example. Rather than the precise recycling of musical material, these longer passages more typically involve recurring melodic outlines, realised differently on each occurrence. In their variability, they are akin to the “semi-lexicalised sentence stems” (1983: 191) described by Pawley and Syder, Wray’s “partly-fixed frames” (2008: 16) and Mackenzie’s “semi-fixed” expressions (2000: 175).

One example of a melodic outline, varied on each rendition, occurs in the performance of the *ṭhumrī* “*Rasa ke bhare tore naina*” by Rasoolan Bai (2007). Figure 2.23 shows two extracts from this performance. The first extract is transcribed on the top line and the second is beneath it. Note that a significant amount of melodic material is shared in these two extracts.

Figure 2.23, two extracts from Rasoolan Bai (2007), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Bhairavī*,

00:23 to 00:39 and 00:53 to 01:06.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ G. See CD 1, tracks 21 and 22.

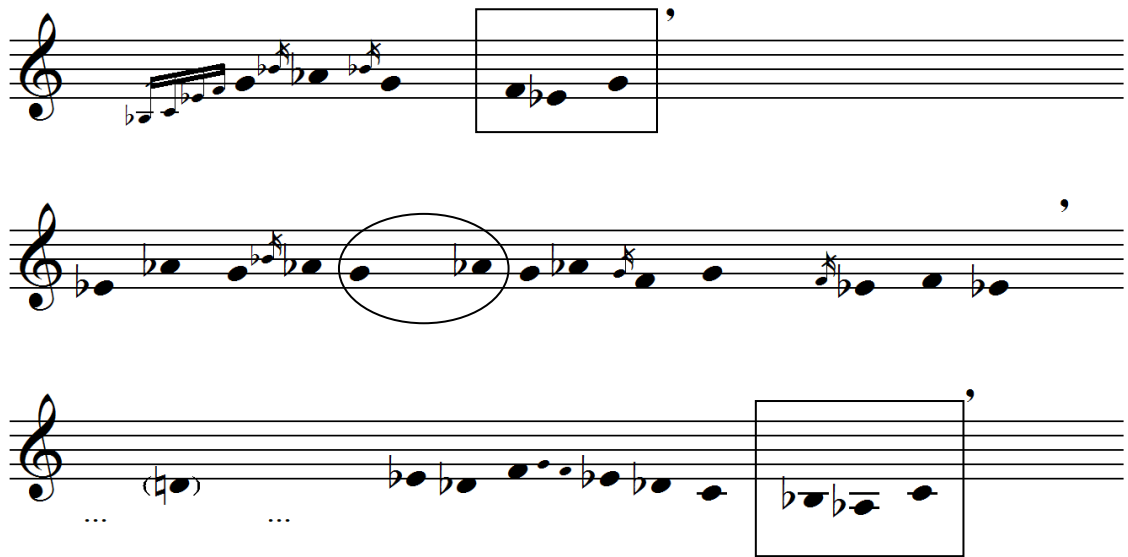


Another example of a recurring melodic outline is revealed by comparing the opening of two different performances in *rāg Bhairavī* by Girija Devi (Devi 2001b and Devi and Gurtu 1997). There are marked similarities in the ways in which she sings the first three phrases of these two different *ṭhumrīs*. Figure 2.24 serves as a transcription of the opening phrases of both these performances. For clarity, each successive phrase is transcribed on its own line. What Devi sings in “*Bājūbanda khula khula jāya*” (Devi 2001b) can be read by looking at all but the two circled notes on the transcription. What she sings in “*Bābula morā*” (Devi and Gurtu 1997) can be read by ignoring the notes shown in the two rectangles. (All the notes not enclosed in circles or rectangles are common to both performances.) I have not transcribed exactly what happens at the start of the bottom line, as this differs too much between the two performances; however, on both occasions Devi uses this moment to introduce *śuddh* R. Despite occasionally differing in the exact notes they use, the vast majority and overall outline of what Devi sings is the same in each performance.

Figure 2.24, extracts from Devi (2001b) and Devi and Gurtu (1997), *ṭhumrīs* in *rāg Bhairavī*.

Devi (2001b), original pitch: *Sa* ~ C#. Devi and Gurtu (1997), original pitch: *Sa* ~ D.

See CD 1, tracks 23 and 24.



In the previous two examples, the musical material was not repeated exactly, but was treated with considerable flexibility. Girija Devi, in particular, displays great ingenuity in the way in which she varies melodic material on repetition. Note in this example the parallel between the ends of the first and last phrases in her rendition of “*Bājūbanda khula khula jāya*”. Towards the end of the first phrase (at the end of the top line here), she rests on P. The phrase could have ended here, as it does in her performance of “*Bābula morā*”. However, she chooses to extend it with the figure MGP. Then, towards the end of the third phrase (on the bottom line), a similar thing happens. Here, she rests on S. Again, the phrase could have ended there as in “*Bābula morā*”, but instead Devi extends it with the figure NDS. This parallelism creates a satisfying musical echo and is typical of the subtle craftsmanship of Devi’s performances. It is worth noting that this example of what I call a “variable melodic outline” itself contains a stock expression in the pattern D^PMP^MG^MG at the end of the second line, which is highly similar in the two performances and also occurs frequently elsewhere in Devi’s *ṭhumrīs* in *Bhairavī* (see figures 2.25, 2.26 and 2.27): this is indicative of the ways in which multiple different types of formulas might overlap and be nested within each other when they are realised in performance.

Figure 2.25, extract from Devi (1992), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Bhairavī*, 13:38 to 13:45.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ D. See CD 1, track 25.



Figure 2.26, extract from Devi (1992), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Bhairavī*, 16.42 to 16.50.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ D. See CD 1, track 26.



Figure 2.27, extract from Devi (1993b), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Bhairavī*, 01:59 to 02:07.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A#. See CD 1, track 27.



Many examples of the types of formulas I have discussed so far (what I have called “stock expressions” and “variable melodic outlines”) are specifically associated with particular *rāgs*; in some cases, they serve a crucial function in signalling to the audience which of a number of similar *rāgs* is being performed. Many musicians emphasise the importance of repeated musical formulas in characterising *rāgs* in *khyāl*, too, often defining *rāgs* with reference to certain “key phrases” (Bor 1999: 2). In his discussion of *rāg* in *ṭhumrī*, Peter Manuel suggests that semi-classical *rāgs* are often more formulaic than classical ones, drawing attention in particular to the high formulaicity of *rāg Bhairavī* and highlighting some of characteristic melodic patterns of a number of other prominent *ṭhumrī rāgs* (Manuel 1989: 195-211).

While noting the association between particular formulas and particular *rāgs*, Manuel also draws attention to remarkable similarities between some of the characteristic phrases of different *rāgs*, highlighting examples in which particular melodic outlines appear in more than one *rāg*, but transposed, so as to make use of different scales degrees in each different *rāg*. In one example, a common phrase starts on P when performed in *rāg Khamāj*, on S when performed in *rāg Kāfi* and on N when performed in *rāg Bhairavī*. Manuel suggests that this phenomenon is a function of the nature of human memory, which may cause phrases to be shared “among different *rāgas* with certain structural affinities” (212-221). There is no space here for further examination of the relationship between musical formulas and the ways in which semi-classical *rāgs* are defined and differentiated from each other and from classical *rāgs*; however, this would seem to be a promising area for future research.

Gestures

Moving further to right on the spectrum shown in figure 2.2, my survey of *ṭhumrī* style has revealed another type of recurring pattern, which I have called “musical gestures”. These are

pitch-contour patterns that recur in *ṭhumrī* performances: they consist of a repeated overall melodic shape, even while the precise scale degrees and intervals through which they are realised might vary. One example of such a gesture may be found at the start of many phrases sung by Girija Devi. Devi often opens a phrase or a section of improvisation with a distinctive, highly ornamented rising figure, which I have shown graphically as an upwards squiggle (2.28). Examples of these can be found in the two *Bhairavī* extracts transcribed in figure 2.24 above, where they traced the outline $\underline{\text{NSGMPDP}}$; these figures occur frequently in almost all of Devi's *ṭhumrī* performances, regardless of the *rāg* or composition she is singing. Figures 2.29, 2.30, 2.31, 2.32 and 2.33 show further instances of this (marked in boxes on the transcription).

Figure 2.28, graphic representation of a rising figure in *ṭhumrīs* by Girija Devi.



Figure 2.29, extract from Devi (1989), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Khamāj*, 00:40 to 00:53.

Tāl = 16-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ *A*. See CD 1, track 28.



Figure 2.30, extract from Devi (1989), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Khamāj*, 05:50 to 05:60.

Tāl = 16-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ *A*. See CD 1, track 29.



Figure 2.31, extract from Devi (1989), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Khamāj*, 08:15 to 08:20.

Tāl = 16-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A. See CD 1, track 30.

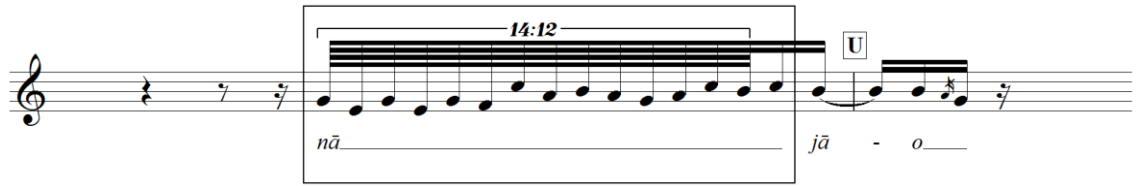


Figure 2.32, extract from Devi (1992), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Bhairavī*, 02:33 to 02:41.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ D. See CD 1, track 31.

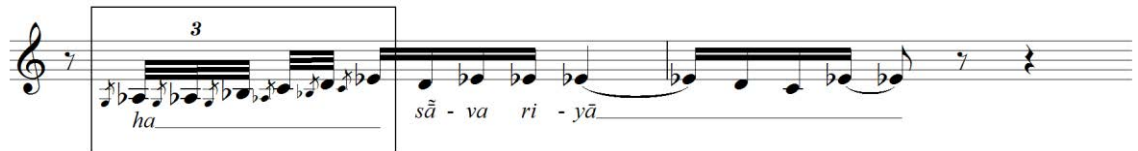
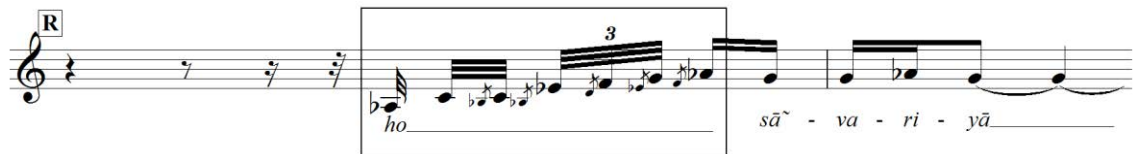


Figure 2.33, extract from Devi (1992), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Bhairavī*, 06:29 to 06:35.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ D. See CD 1, track 32.



Another musical gesture informs the extracts in figures 2.34, 2.35, 2.36, 2.37, 2.38 and 2.39. I call this gesture “downward chromatic sliding”. It is extremely common in *ṭhumrī* and is characteristic of the genre. In instances of downward chromatic sliding, musicians exploit the possibility, unique in semi-classical renderings of *rāg*, of being able to sing two versions of the same scale degree by moving chromatically down through them.

Figure 2.34, extract from Joshi (2002a), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Tila g*, 08:39 to 08:42.

Tāl = *tīntāl*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ C#. See CD 1, track 33.

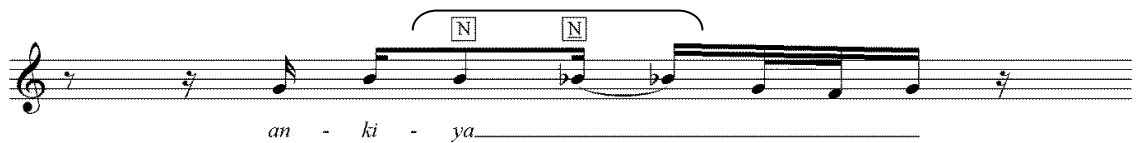


Figure 2.35, extract from Badi Moti Bai (n.d.), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Bhairavī*, 03:34 to 03:41.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ F#. See CD 1, track 34.



Figure 2.36, extract from Sharma (2003 [2002]), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg miśra Deś*, 11:15 to 11:22.

Tāl = *tīntāl*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A#. See CD 1, track 35.



Figure 2.37, extract from Devi (2002), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Pīlū*, 07:34 to 07:46.

Tāl = 16-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ D. See CD 1, track 36.



Figure 2.38, extract from Devi (2001a), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Pīlū*, 05:44 to 05:41.

Tāl = 16-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ C#. See CD 1, track 37.



Figure 2.39, extract from Devi (1993b), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Bhairavī*, 04:41 to 04:44.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A#. See CD 1, track 38.



Variable melodic outlines and musical gestures are examples of formulas which blur the boundary between object and process, incorporating elements of both. As schematic musical

outlines, involving the use of particular pitches in a particular order, they constitute musical objects in their own right. They also, however, constitute musical processes that can be applied to already existing formulaic material. Many of Devi's opening upward gestures, for example, incorporate key formulaic patterns of the *rāg* that she is presenting. Note also in figure 2.24 that the melodic outline functions as a process that transforms MGP at the end of the first line into the parallel figure NDS at the end of the third.

Strategies

Moving to the right-hand end of the spectrum are what Widdess and Nooshin label “compositional strategies” (2006) or what Steven Slawek calls “dynamic, generative programs” (1998). These do not imply any particular collections of pitches, or even specific pitch contours, but rather are abstract principles which musicians may use in generating extempore passages. One such formula in *ṭhumrī* is what I have labelled the “end-rhyme strategy”. In instances of this strategy, the soloist sings a number of successive phrases, all of which end with the same musical material. Other organising schemas often also come into play in passages which use the end-rhyme strategy. For example, each successive phrase often increases in complexity and/or utilises a greater range than its predecessor, in examples of what Napier labels “intensification” (discussed above).

Note the three successive ways in which Girija Devi sings the text “*avanakī*” in figure 2.40, from the *ṭhumrī* “*Kaise likhū patiyā*”. The first is relatively simple: DNDP. The next two renditions become increasingly complex and introduce ever higher pitches; each time, however, they retain the distinctive NDP at the end.

Figure 2.40, extract from Devi (2002), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Pīlū*, 02:25 to 02:35.

Tāl = 16-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ D. See CD 1, track 39.



The end-rhyme strategy is part of a broader family of strategies which I have labelled “successive variation” strategies. According to such strategies, musicians make a point of focussing on a relatively small amount of musical material, singing successive units which retain some aspects of the musical material of previous units while varying others. In the context of the end-rhyme strategy, for example, the end of the phrase is kept the same, while the beginning is varied.

Another example of successive variation can be found in the *ṭhumrī* “*Sajan tum kahe ko neha lagaye*”, sung by Abdul Karim Khan (2003a), transcribed in figure 2.41. The top line shows a short phrase, setting one line of text. After singing this, Khan then sings a number of shorter figures, each borrowing musical material from the initial phrase, but varying it on repetition. I have aligned the chunks vertically so as to show from which part of the opening line all the subsequent figures are derived.

Figure 2.41, extract from Khan (2003a), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Tila g*, 01:00 to 01:30.

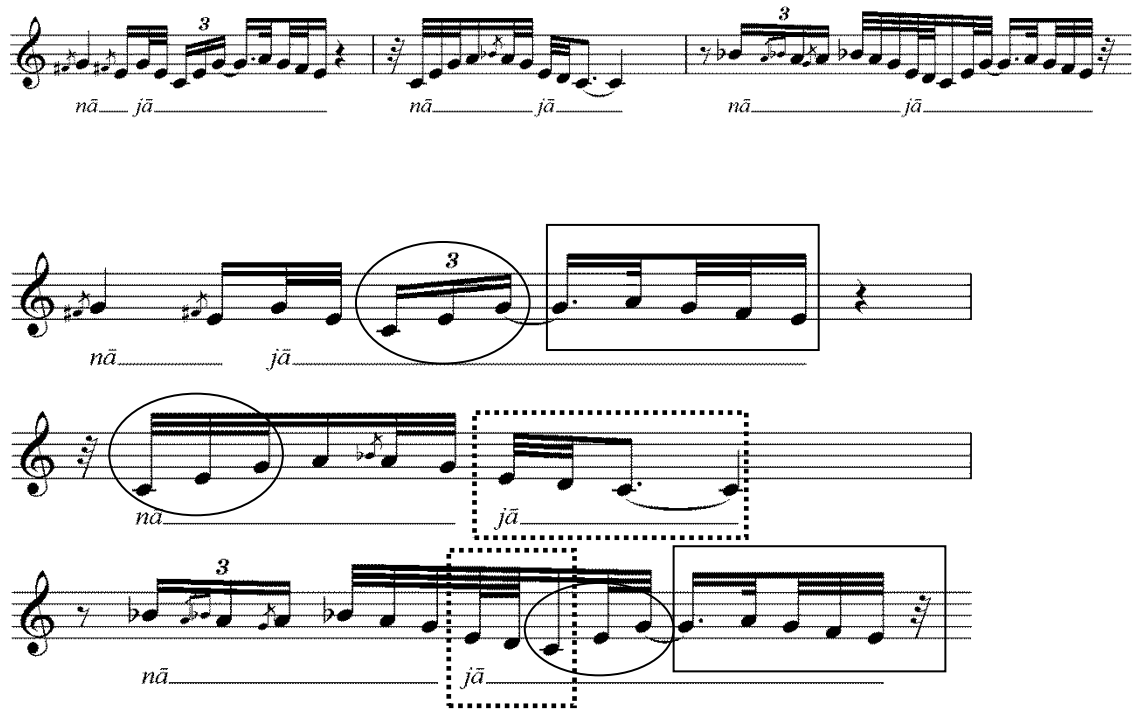
Tāl = *kaharvā*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ F#. See CD 1, track 40.



Figure 2.42 shows another instance of successive variation. Here, there are three melodic characteristics that are shared in these phrases; I have indicated them with circles, rectangles and dotted rectangles. In all three phrase-units, Begum Akhtar sings the figure SGP, circled here. In the first and third phrase-units, this is followed by the figure PGPMG, which I have marked with a solid rectangle. In the second and third phrase-units, she sings the start of the word “*jā*” to the pitches GRS, marked here with a dotted rectangle, in a figure which echoes the rapid PMG of the end of the first phrase-unit.

Figure 2.42, extract from Akhtar (2005), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg miśra Khamāj*, 03:06 to 03:23.

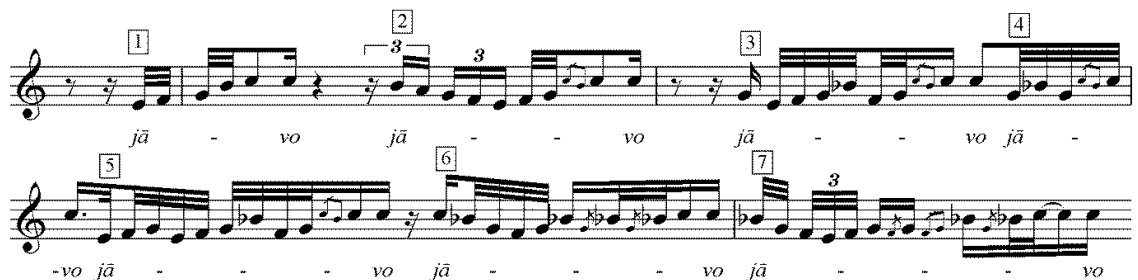
Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A#. See CD 1, track 41.



Another example of successive variation is shown in figure 2.43. Here, each successive phrase-unit explores different ways of singing “*jāvo*” that ascend melodically to on “*jā-*” and conclude with a syllabic setting of “*-vo*” at . Many melodic features are shared between these different settings. These include the figure GMP in phrase-units 1, 2, 3, 5, and 7; MP N in 2, 3 and 5, preceded by GMPN in 3 and 5; and N alternating with grace-note P in 6 and 7.

Figure 2.43, extract from Devī (1960), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Khamāj*, 09:53 to 10:10.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ G#. See CD 1, track 42.



Another subset of successive variation strategies is the group of what I have labelled “transposition strategies”. In a transposition strategy, a short musical figure is repeated, but transposed, so as to appear at different pitches, often successively higher. When this occurs, any distinctive rhythmic features are normally retained, as are the lyrics. Figures 2.44, 2.45 and 2.46 show examples of this in three different *ṭhumrī* performances: the transposed figures are labelled x, y and z in each respective example.

Figure 2.44, extract from Devi (1993a), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Pīlū*, 02:10 to 02:24.

Tāl = 16-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A. See CD 1, track 43.

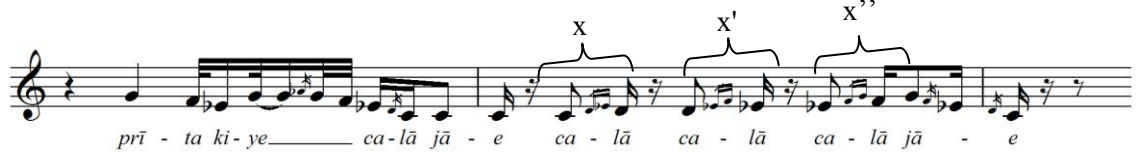


Figure 2.45, extract from Joshi (2002b), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Kāfī*, 04:18 to 04:25.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ E. See CD 1, track 44.

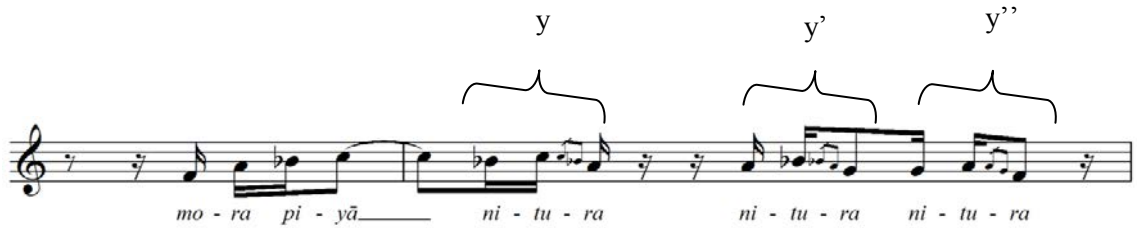


Figure 2.46, extract from Rasoolan Bai (1964), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Jogiyā*, 04:21 to 04:30.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ G. See CD 1, track 45.



Successive variation strategies are very common in *ṭhumrī*; they would seem to be particularly appropriate to the aesthetic of *bol banāo* text elaboration. One of the defining features of *ṭhumrī* is the process by which singers sing one piece of text to different melodic settings, each designed to bring out different emotional nuances in the words. In such passages, the text is kept the same while the melody is varied. (Figure 2.43 shows a very typical example of this.) The technique just discussed here of singing one melodic phrase in a number of slightly different ways, and sometimes to different texts, displays a similarly inventive impulse and demonstrates a similar desire to explore the potential inherent in a limited amount of (musical and/or textual) material.

Further comments on variation and variety in North Indian classical music

Successive variation is a strategy that privileges the variation of musical material as a primary focus of musical interest within a short passage of music. It affords listeners the opportunity to marvel at the ingenuity of a musician who is able to create seemingly endless variants of small

amount of musical material. This is not the only way in which variation occurs in North Indian classical music. Sometimes musical material is repeated, with variation, such that its different occurrences are separated by a period of some time, perhaps over the course of a single performance or in different performances. This chapter has already drawn attention to instances, for example, where musicians sing different variants of a common melodic outline, separated by a few minutes in performance, or even in different performances.

It seems likely that some variation occurs unconsciously, as a consequence of the limitations of human memory. In my singing lessons, my teacher told me to memorise and repeat large amounts of musical material. Often, my inability to memorise this material exactly would result in my varying it over the course of the lesson. (I would discover this later, when I got home and listened back to the recordings I had made of my singing lessons.) However, in North Indian classical music, the variation of musical material on each repetition is not always merely a haphazard consequence of the nature of memory, but rather something for which musicians consciously strive. Musicians often vary even the composition itself (including the *mukhṛā*), though they consider it “fixed”. My teacher has remarked that this is “to avoid boredom”, both of the listener and the performer. In my lessons, she would sometimes demonstrate numerous ways of varying and ornamenting the compositions she taught me, singing different versions, one after another. This would normally continue for a few minutes, in an extended show of inventiveness and creativity. Sharma would then instruct me to listen to my recordings of my lessons, choose some five or six versions of the composition from the many that she had sung, and then memorise them, so as to be able to use them in my own performances. (Sharma’s demonstrations of variants of the composition constituted performances in themselves, informed by successive variation strategy.)

Sharma’s attitude is indicative of a more widespread premium on variety achieved through variation in North Indian classical music. There are social reasons for this. Napier (2006) has written of the importance of “subtle variation” for North Indian classical musicians. He sees this as a result of two simultaneous and contradictory impulses that act upon them: for their performances to be considered praiseworthy, they are expected both to remain faithful to the style of their teachers and *gharānās* (pedagogical lineages) and also to demonstrate musical originality. Variation (rather than innovation) allows musicians to strike a balance between novelty and conservatism by singing in a way that recognisably adheres to the styles of their predecessors (and also to the rules of *rāg* grammar), without replicating the performances of other musicians.

In Wray’s account of formulaicity in language, she notes that the extent to which formulas appear in a particular context is partly determined by the extent to which “the producer [desires] to be specifically novel in expression” (2008, 57). In the case of *thumrī*, a premium on variety

militates against precise repetition but not against formulaicity *per se*. Acknowledging this can help to account for the frequency with which formulaic patterns are varied on repetition in *ṭhumrī*. This is another aspect of *ṭhumrī* that is well suited to Wray's holistic model of formulaicity. By avoiding drawing a direct, causal link between formulas and orality and instead looking at the ways in which a variety of social and psychological factors affect formulaicity, this model can account not only for why formulas occur but also for why they occur differently in different contexts.

The beginning-middle-end paradigm: formulas and the delineation of phrase structure

In his analysis of eighteenth-century stock musical schemas, Gjerdingen notes that certain patterns served particular roles in delineating the structure of phrases. He describes the schema he calls the Romanesca, for example, as an “opening gambit”; the Prinner, meanwhile, functions as a “riposte”, usually following an opening gambit such as the Romanesca. Kofi Agawu has also written of the syntactic function of different types of musical material in the eighteenth century, detailing what he calls the “beginning middle end” paradigm (1991, chapter 3). He notes that certain musical units have “beginning” function and tend to appear at the start of phrases, others have “middle” function and tend to appear in the middle of phrases and yet others have “end” function and function as closing figures. In his discussion of the stock patterns of jazz, Berliner, too, notes that certain figures are more suited to the beginnings of phrases than others. He describes the “catalytic” function of certain types of musical material, which may cause musicians to use it at the outset of solos (1994: 227).

In *ṭhumrī*, likewise, certain formulas seem to occur most frequently at particular points within phrases. I have already mentioned an example of this when I described the upward gestures that Girija Devi uses to commence new phrases. Other formulas tend to occur at the close of phrases and phrase-units. In her “*Mitva mane nare*”, for example, Begum Akhtar frequently closes phrase-units with the figure $\underline{\text{GR}}^{\text{S}}$ S (sometimes omitting the grace-note S). Figures 2.47, 2.48, 2.49 and 2.50 show some examples of this. In this performance, this figure never occurs in the middle of a phrase; in all instances, Akhtar stops singing afterwards and takes a breath. Note that it sometimes occurs in successive units (see figures 2.48 and 2.49): here, it functions both as a more universal stock expression and also as part of a local end-rhyme strategy. Note also in figure 2.48 that the second rendition of the figure here is interrupted. It breaks on $\underline{\text{GR}}^{\text{S}}$, denying the listener the resolution that would have been provided by the final S. This increases the sense of closure when the figure is then repeated at the end of the next phrase-unit. (The closure created here is sufficient for Akhtar then to cease singing for two full *vibhāgs*, shown here as bars, before introducing a new musical idea.)

Figure 2.47, extract from Akhtar (1990), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Kāfī*, 01:23 to 01:30.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A#. See CD 1, track 46.

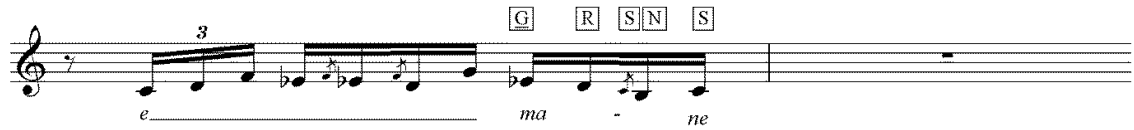


Figure 2.48, extract from Akhtar (1990), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Kāfī*, 02:00 to 02:17.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A#. See CD 1, track 47.

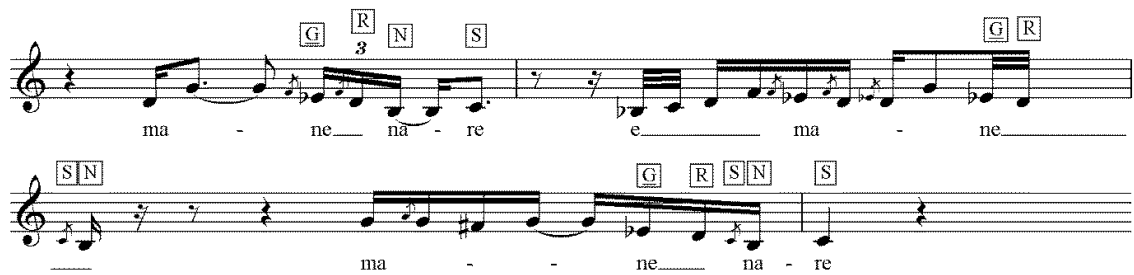


Figure 2.49, extract from Akhtar (1990), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Kāfī*, 04:17 to 04:26.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A#. See CD 1, track 48.

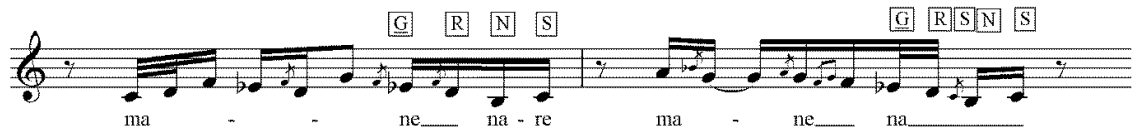


Figure 2.50, extract from Akhtar (1990), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Kāfī*, 06:35 to 06:41.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A#. See CD 1, track 49.



The repeated use of particular musical units in a particular position within phrases creates a sense of musical syntax; it allows formulas to serve as familiar landmarks for listeners, delineating the structure even of unfamiliar musical phrases. This also affords the opportunity for musicians to manipulate listeners' expectations, for example by extending a phrase after a conventional closing figure or by interrupting closing figures so as to create a greater sense of resolution when they are finally performed in full (as in figure 2.48). There are many other ways

in which musicians exploit the distribution of formulas in performance in order to create and manipulate listeners' expectations: musicians may, for example, repeatedly perform two formulas in succession, creating a sense of surprise when the first is not followed by the second.

Conclusion: formulas and the analysis of *ṭhumrī* styles

This chapter has considered ways of analysing the musical patterns that recur in *ṭhumrī* performances. It has introduced terminology for different types of formulas and considered how studies of formulas in other fields can shed light on *ṭhumrī*. Along with some theoretical groundwork, I have presented the first stages of an analysis of formulas in *ṭhumrī*. I believe that the phenomenon of recurring formulas in North Indian classical music holds enormous potential for further investigation. In particular, future research could explore the extent to which formulas play a role in characterising different musical styles.

Discussion of the differences between “semi-classical” and “classical” genres in North Indian classical music touches upon a variety of parameters. There are differences in the social meaning of genres, in popular understandings of their history, in the way in which musicians introduce them on stage and in the way in which musicians and audiences interpret their lyrics. There are also musical characteristics that differ in classical and semi-classical genres, including the *rāgs* permitted and way in which musicians use ornamentation. In this chapter, I have drawn attention to what I call “successive variation” and “downward chromatic sliding”: both formulas are characteristic of *ṭhumrī*. I suggested that successive variation contributes to the production in *ṭhumrī* of a specifically semi-classical “*bol banāo* aesthetic”. Downward chromatic sliding, meanwhile, is a quintessentially semi-classical formula, since it requires that the singer be able to sing two versions of the same scale degree in close proximity, something only normally permitted in semi-classical performances. I would like to suggest that recurring musical formulas also play a role in delineating the boundary between classical and semi-classical genres. Since most *ṭhumrī* singers are also *khyāl* singers, further comparison between the use of formulas in *ṭhumrī* and in *khyāl* would be valuable.

Further research on formulas could also focus on the analysis of the individual style of particular musicians or groups of musicians. In her study of formulaic language, Wray discusses “the need to distinguish between something that is formulaic ‘in the language’, so to speak, and something that is formulaic just for a particular individual or group” (2008, 11). Likewise, Nicholas Magriel discusses the varying degrees of universality of patterns in North Indian classical music in his article “The barhat tree” (1997). He distinguishes between a musical “idiolect”, which is a performer’s unique conception of the *rāg* of the performance, a “dialect”, which might be shared by a number of musicians in the same pedagogical lineage, and a

“language”, which constitutes the universal set of musical characteristics common to all renditions of a particular *rāg* (109). In *ṭhumrī*, there would seem to be multiple levels at which musical material might recur. At the broadest possible level, a particular pattern might be used commonly by a large number of *ṭhumrī* singers and might be considered ‘in the language’ of *ṭhumrī*. Another pattern might be shared primarily by singers of a particular *gharānā*, or by singers who specialise in a particular *āg* (branch) of *ṭhumrī* style. Yet another pattern might characterise the style of one individual, or of a prominent teacher and his or her pupils. There would seem to be great potential in looking in detail at the formulas favoured by particular musicians, analysing not only their individual formulaic vocabularies but also their individual approaches to combining and varying formulas in performance. It would also be valuable to consider the extent to which formulas can be transmitted from teacher to pupil. Given the large amount of memorisation involved in learning to sing, it would seem likely that pupils would commonly inherit formulaic turns of phrase from their teacher. These would seem to be rich areas for future study, promising to shed light on the nature of style in North Indian classical music. In the next chapter, I take a different approach to analysing certain types of formulas in *ṭhumrī*, considering the meanings they carry within communities of performers and listeners.

CHAPTER THREE

A semiotic approach to *ṭhumrī* style (formulas, continued)

Semiotics and music analysis

In the last chapter I examined musical formulas in *ṭhumrī*; I argued that they are the basic structural units of *ṭhumrī* style. In this chapter I will discuss ways in which certain formulas can function as musical signs. Just as I proposed there that formulas are the building blocks of musical structure in *ṭhumrī*, so I would like to suggest here that signs are the building blocks of meaning in the genre. I will argue that *ṭhumrī* is a network of musical signs, which often evoke shared meanings for the people who perform and listen to it. Throughout this chapter, I will make use of theories, concepts and terminology borrowed from the field of semiotics, which is the study of signs. I will use these to shed light on some of the ways in which cultural insiders construct the genre as meaningful and to analyse some particular instances of musical signs in the *ṭhumrī* performances of a variety of twentieth-century singers.

Semiotics, the study of signs and signification, involves the analysis of processes of meaning-making in language and a variety of other, comparable domains. Semioticians consider the functioning of signs to be central to the ways in which humans experience the world as meaningful. Semiotics developed as a distinct field of study over the course of the twentieth century in two parallel, but often interacting, scholarly traditions, each associated with one of the discipline's two founding theorists, Ferdinand Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce. The principal theoretical differences between these two strands stem from differences in the ways in which each of their two founding theorists modelled the sign. For Saussure, the sign is a two-part entity, consisting of a signifier and a signified. An example of this could be the word “cat”, which is a signifier whose signified is the concept of a particular kind of small mammal. Saussure's two-part model of the sign has precedents dating back to antiquity, including the medieval definition “*aliquid stat pro aliquo*”, or “something stands for something else” (see Nöth 1990: 84-85). Peirce's model of the sign, on the other hand, is triadic, involving three entities, which Peirce labelled the “representamen”, the “object” and the “interpretant”. In this triadic model, the “representamen” is “something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity” (Peirce, quoted in Innis 1985: 5), or the “form which the sign takes” (Chandler 2007: 258). This might consist, for example, of the word “cat” written on a page, or the sounds of the word as it is spoken. Some semioticians sometimes call Peirce's “representamen” the “sign vehicle”, often when they wish to emphasise its material

characteristics, for example the qualities of the voice by which a word is spoken (Chandler 2007: 260). Peirce's "object" is the thing to which the representamen or sign vehicle refers (perhaps some particular cat in the real world, or a type of animal) and his "interpretant" is the mental effect that the sign has on the person who interprets it (perhaps the picture of a cat that appears in the mind's eye of the interpreter). Peirce describes the "interpretant" as a sign in itself, writing that "[The *representamen*] addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign, [which] I call the *interpretant* of the first sign" (quoted in Innis 1985: 5).

Many semioticians treat language as the sign system *par excellence*; since its inception, the field of semiotics has always been closely related to linguistics. In addition to linguists, however, scholars working in a variety of other disciplines have contributed to the development of semiotics, including literary critics, film theorists, anthropologists, sociologists and biologists. Semiotic theories, concepts and terminology have also appeared in the study of music. A number of music scholars, for example, have turned to semiotics as a way of illuminating how music can mean things for the people who perform and listen to it. Despite their common grounding in semiotics, these musical studies often differ from each other enormously in terms of the theoretical paradigms on which they depend and their resulting methodologies, as well as the musical subject matter to which they are applied. There is no space here for a comprehensive survey of semiotics, or even the relatively smaller field of music semiotics; however, in the following paragraphs, I will introduce and briefly outline selected semiotic concepts that are pertinent to my analysis of *ṭhumrī* style later in the chapter.

Icon / index / symbol and Peirce's ways of classifying signs

Peirce was interested in distinguishing between and categorising different types of signs: he suggested terminology to describe signs with different characteristics. One of his most influential ways of classifying signs was to group them according to the different types of relationships that might exist between the representamen or sign vehicle and the object to which it refers. He suggested three terms to make sense of these relationships: "icon", "index" and "symbol". For a sign to be labelled an "icon", its representamen will be related to its object by virtue of some similarity or resemblance to it. A painting of a cat, for example, displays visual similarities with cats in the real world, and therefore functions as an icon. For a sign to be an "index", its representamen must represent its object as a result of having a direct connection with it (Chandler 2007: 37). Peirce writes that "an index is a sign which refers to the Object that it denotes by virtue of being really affected by that Object" (quoted in Innis 1985: 8). Scholars (including Peirce himself) often point to weathervanes as examples of indexical signs, since they reference the direction of the wind by being physically affected by it. For a "symbol", meanwhile, there is no direct connection between representamen and object, but an indirect one,

created “by virtue of a law, usually an association of general ideas, which operates to cause the Symbol to be interpreted as referring to that Object”. The word “cat” is an example of a symbol: the word itself does not bear any resemblance to cats, but is associated with them by particular linguistic conventions, which must be learned.

The ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino has considered ways in which this and other Peircean classifications can shed light on how signs function in music. He appropriates Peircean terminology in order to account semiotically for what he considers to be “music’s special potential for creating emotional effects” (1999: 232). Specifically, he proposes that this special power is a result of the fact that musical signs usually operate iconically and especially indexically, rather than symbolically. The result of this, he argues, is that they are more likely to produce “emotional, sensory interpretants” (where an emotional interpretant is a “direct, unreflected-upon feeling caused by a sign” (224)) or “energetic interpretants” (where an energetic interpretant is “a physical reaction caused by a sign” (224)) than “higher language-mediated interpretants” (232-233). Drawing a contrast between “particularly sensory and direct types of signs and effects” and “those that are mediated by language”, Turino writes, “It is my thesis that the power of music to create emotional responses and to realize personal and social identities is based in the fact that musical signs are typically of the direct, less-mediated type” (223-4). Thus, for Turino, symbols are less “direct” than icons or indices because they (symbols) are mediated by language. Since music involves icons and especially indices more than symbols, he argues, then music is a particularly direct and powerful art form.

Turino focuses on indices, defining an index as “a sign that is related to its object through co-occurrence in actual experience”, giving as an example the song the “Star Spangled Banner”, which, he claims, “may serve as an index for baseball games, Fourth of July parades, school assemblies, or imperialism depending on the experiences of the perceiver”. Turino writes that “the power of indices derives from the fact that the sign-object relations are based in co-occurrences within one’s own life experiences, and thus become intimately bound as experience” (1999: 227).

Turino’s description of indices differs somewhat from the various descriptions of indices that appear in the work of Peirce. For Turino, the connection between the representamen and its object in the case of an index is a result of a previous “co-occurrence” of the two within the “life experiences” of the interpreter. By the time the interpreter makes an indexical connection between a representamen and its object, these “life experiences” might be long in the past, existing only in the interpreter’s memory. (For example, if one first hears a piece of music while sitting with a particular friend, that piece of music will probably not already signify that friend on that first hearing. On subsequent hearings, however, that piece of music might evoke the memory of the friend, even if he or she is not present.) Peirce, on the other hand, describes

indices as contingent on a “direct physical” or “real” connection which does not rely on the presence of an interpreter at all. Peirce writes, “An *index* is a sign which would, at once, lose the character which makes it a sign if its object were removed, but would not lose that character if there were no interpretant. Such, for instance, is a piece of mould with a bullet-hole in it as sign of a shot; for without the shot there would have been no hole; but there is a hole there, whether anybody has the sense to attribute it to a shot or not” (quoted in Innis 1985: 9-10). It is worth noting, however, that Peirce’s own ideas about indices developed over time: see Goudge (1965) for a discussion of the ambiguities and contradictions inherent in Peirce’s changing definitions of indices.

Regardless of the accuracy with which it reflects Peirce’s descriptions, Turino’s understanding of indices offers a useful way of making sense of some of the ways that music can take on meaning for its listeners, for example by illuminating the role that memory plays in generating the very direct and powerful associations that attach to particular pieces of music for particular people. Turino’s approach to musical indices is also valuable in its ability to illuminate how music contributes to the formation of social identities. He writes, “Indexical relations are grounded in personal experience; the members of social groups will share indices proportional to common experiences... Indices are grounded in one’s personal and social life and are thus constitutive of identity – both in the sense of being part-and-parcel of one’s personal past, as well as being signs of shared social experience” (1999: 235).

Turino discusses a number of specific examples of different types of musical signs. He highlights, for example, two possible ways in which the sounds of a particular *rāg* might come to refer to the time “morning”. This relationship might, he writes, be symbolic if an American student learns that the *rāg* is a morning *rāg* by means of verbal explanation in an American classroom. On the other hand, this relationship might be indexical for someone who grew up in India and became accustomed to hearing that *rāg* over the radio in the morning. He draws this contrast between indexical and symbolic sign/object relationships in order to substantiate his claim that “indices are experienced as “real” because they are rooted, often redundantly, in one’s own life experiences and, as memory, become the actual mortar of personal and social identity” (1999: 228-9). Other examples of musical signs he mentions include instances of musical iconicity: he draws attention to the work of Steven Feld (1988) and Becker and Becker (1981) on Kaluli and African Pygmy singing, noting in both cases that these musical forms involve iconicity between sound and the social and ecological environment in which they appear and suggesting that “musical forms that “sound like”, that is resemble, in some way, other parts of social experience are received as true, good, and natural” (1999: 234).

Turino also fruitfully draws upon the distinction Peirce draws between “rhemes” and “dicents”. This classification refers to the different ways in which signs are interpreted, such that a “rheme

is a sign that is interpreted as representing its object as a qualitative possibility”, that is, “a sign that is not judged as true or false but as something that is simply possible”, while a *dicent* is “a sign which is understood to represent its object in actual existence” (229).¹⁴ Turino applies this distinction to a discussion of the reception of contemporary popular music. He notes that his undergraduate students tend to “take their favorite star’s signs of emotion literally”, interpreting certain sonic qualities as *dicents*, that is, as literal signifiers of the singer’s emotional state. For Turino himself, meanwhile, these signs of emotion are “less convincing”, the singers appearing “like actors who train themselves to reproduce given emotional cues for the effectiveness of their art”: thus, for Turino, these musical signs are operating as *rhemes*. Turino notes that his undergraduates’ interpreting signs as *dicents* in this case is partly the result of the social framing of music as literal emotional expression: he writes that, “for many music genres in our society, especially in the popular music field, a common assumption is that musicians really mean and are experiencing what they express” (239).

In this chapter, I will discuss various examples of musical icons and indices, arguing that this Peircean classification can shed light on how signs function in *ṭhumrī*. Following Turino, I will also make use of the distinction between *rhemes* and *dicents* in order to consider how insiders construct meaning in relation to *ṭhumrī*. Unlike Turino, however, I will not claim that music operates in such a way as to create effects that are entirely direct and unmediated. Rather, I will argue that language and cultural conventions mediate even iconic and indexical signs in *ṭhumrī*. I will further suggest that the appearance of iconicity and indexicality in relation to *ṭhumrī* is partially a result of the way in which meaning is discursively attached to the genre, drawing attention to some of the ways that musicians construct *ṭhumrī* as meaningful when they talk about it.

Motivation, arbitrariness and convention

It is not only Peirce and his successors who classified signs according to the different kinds of relationships that exist between signifiers and their signifieds. Saussure, too, discussed such relationships, although in different terms. He theorised what he called the “arbitrariness” of linguistic signs; by this, he referred to the absence of any inherent connection between the nature of the signifier and the object to which it refers. Rather, like Peirce’s “symbols”, “arbitrary” signifiers are connected to their signifieds only by convention. Saussure writes, “The idea of ‘sister’ is not linked by any inner relationship to the succession of sounds *s-ö-r* which

¹⁴ This Peircean classification, in fact, also involves a third term, “arguments”, which Turino ignores because he considers it “largely within the propositional, semantic-referential linguistic domain” and therefore “not particularly relevant to the analysis of musical signs” (1999:230).

serves as its signifier in French; that it could be represented equally by just any other sequence is proved by differences among languages and by the very existence of different languages” (quoted in Innis 1985: 38). He cites “onomatopoeic formations and interjections” as possible counter-examples to this claim about the nature of language, but concludes that they are only “of secondary importance”, drawing attention to their rarity and the fact that they are “chosen somewhat arbitrarily” and are “only approximate and more or less conventional imitations of certain sounds”, such that there may be differences in different languages between the sounds even of words which represent a single signified and which, in both languages, are understood as onomatopoeic (39).

In contrast with the arbitrary nature of linguistic signs, scholars in the Saussurean tradition theorise that other types of signs may be “motivated” to various degrees. “Motivation”, here, describes the extent to which the nature of the signifier is determined by the signified. Thus signs in which the link between signifier and signified is established entirely by means of social convention (Peirce’s “symbols”) are, in Saussurean terms, “unmotivated” or “arbitrary”, while signs in which the signifier is determined by its signified (including Peirce’s “icons” and “indices”) are motivated, and are more highly motivated when the signified more closely determines the nature of the signifier (see Chandler 2007: 38).

This Saussurean conception of motivation might initially seem uncontroversial. However, a number of scholars have highlighted complexities in the way in which motivation functions in practice. Daniel Chandler points out that many signifiers which appear to be “realistic” representations of their signifieds (that is, which appear to be highly motivated signifiers) may in fact be far less motivated than they seem. Rather they might merely be socially constructed as realistic or motivated, disguising the conventions on which they draw (2007: 160-165). He writes, “The depiction of reality even in iconic signs involves variable codes which have to be learned, yet which, with experience, come to be taken for granted as transparent and obvious” (2007: 165). He points to the work of Ernst Gombrich (1982: 100, 273) on photography for an example of this, noting that “the first instant snapshots confounded Western viewers because they were not accustomed to arrested images of transient movements” and suggesting that “photography involved a new ‘way of seeing’ ... which had to be learned before it could become transparent” (2007: 161). Chandler also discusses Gombrich’s work on the Pioneer spacecraft, in which Gombrich argues that the seemingly obvious depictions of male and female human bodies in line-drawings on the craft could never possibly be understood by the theoretical aliens for whom they were produced. He cites Gombrich, who writes that “our ‘scientifically educated’ fellow creatures in space might be forgiven if they saw the figures as wire constructs with loose bits and pieces hovering weightlessly in between” (quoted in Chandler 2007: 177). In this case, Gombrich argues that signs which were constructed with the clear purpose of being

highly motivated, neutral representations of reality are in fact so dependent on social conventions of representation that they would be unintelligible without prior knowledge of those conventions. Chandler writes, “As Catherine Belsey notes, ‘realism is plausible not because it reflects the world, but because it is constructed out of what is (discursively) familiar’... Ironically, the ‘naturalness’ of realist texts comes not from their reflection of reality but from their uses of codes which are derived from other texts” (2007: 160).

Thus it becomes possible to think of the motivation of signs as operating at two levels. At the first, most simple level, signs may be “objectively” motivated to different degrees: that is, the nature of their signifiers may, to varying extents, be determined by aspects of their signifieds. (This may be a matter of resemblance, as in Peirce’s “icons” or perhaps a matter of causality, as in Peirce’s “indices”.) At the second level of motivation, to which Chandler and Gombrich draw attention, signs may be culturally constructed as motivated within particular discourses. At this second level, signs may appear to cultural insiders to be highly iconic, despite displaying only very little actual resemblance between sign vehicle and object. Gombrich’s discussion of the signs on the Pioneer spacecraft is a good example of this: cultural insiders perceive them as iconic, neglecting to notice the cultural conventions on which their meaningfulness depends. Some scholars refer to the process by which signs come to appear to be more highly motivated than, in reality, they are as a process of “naturalisation”. Thus Chandler writes “Codes which have been naturalized are those which are so widely distributed in a culture and which are learned at such an early age that they appear not to be constructed but to be ‘naturally’ given”, which has the result of “making the cultural seem ‘natural’, ‘normal’, ‘self-evident’, ‘common-sense’, and thus ‘taken-for-granted’” (accessed 2012). Adding this extra layer of complexity to Peirce’s distinction between icons, indices and symbols, it is possible, then, to draw attention to signs which are culturally constructed as icons or indexes but which are also symbolic, since they depend on culturally specific conventions of signification in order to be deciphered. Since we all understand the world around us within particular cultural frameworks, often without our even realising, and since many of the signs we encounter will have come to seem natural (perhaps unambiguously iconic) by virtue of our years of experience of them, it is often very difficult to distinguish between these two levels of motivation and to identify the cultural conventions that inform seemingly natural and obvious signs.¹⁵

In a discussion of musical iconicity, Raymond Monelle notes the conventional nature of many musical signs. He proposes that “the idea of the iconic sign is naturally attractive to musicians”, writing, “Perhaps a sad aria is meaningful because it resembles a cry of sadness. Perhaps a rapid musical passage derives its meaning from a resemblance to quick physical movement” (1992:

¹⁵ Much of the semiotic work of Roland Barthes is devoted to the “denaturalisation” of seemingly natural codes of signification. See for example *Mythologies* (1991 [1957]).

200). However, he warns against unquestioningly accepting the naturalness of apparent musical icons, drawing attention to the work of Umberto Eco and Ernst Gombrich on the conventional nature of musical signs. He concludes, following David Osmond-Smith (1972), that “musical iconism in the most obvious sense ‘tends to be of peripheral importance’ in music”. He points out that “synaesthesia forms the basis for many musical effects, which are sometimes so vivid that the score itself seems to resemble the object”, noting, for example, that “when water is represented by arpeggio figures, these *look* like waves on the page” (1992: 206). However, he writes that “only in very few cases ... could the signification be guessed without a verbal commentary”. Monelle also draws attention to some of the conventional, culturally constructed meanings that might be embedded in apparently iconic or partially iconic musical signs. Drawing attention to the “synaesthesia” whereby “‘high’ and ‘low’ notes can be used to suggest physical position or movement”, he further notes that they can come to signify “other oppositions like light dark”, drawing attention to an example of this in the music of Handel (206-7).

In this chapter, I will discuss examples of what I consider to be secondary (socially constructed) motivation in *ṭhumrī*. I will examine the discourse that surrounds *ṭhumrī* in order to consider ways in which certain conventional musical signs in *ṭhumrī* are naturalised for insiders in the musical culture surrounding North Indian classical music. In particular I will highlight a number of specific examples of musical signs which, though culturally constructed as iconic or indexical, nevertheless rely on a variety of musical and cultural conventions in order to be intelligible. In the next chapter, I will pick up on this theme again, considering the social reasons why aspects of *ṭhumrī*’s musical signification might be naturalised in this way. There, I will discuss the way in which this naturalisation forms a part of wider, socially embedded discourses about the genre, and how it might contribute to attempts to improve the genre’s prestige within a particularly fraught social environment.

Multiple meanings and social codes

As the field of semiotics has developed over the course of the twentieth century, various scholars have increasingly highlighted ways in which it is incorrect to assume a fixed, one-to-one relationship between all sign vehicles and specific objects in the real world. Instead, they have highlighted the possibility that sign vehicles may take on multiple different meanings for different interpreters or in different circumstances, or may even take on numerous meanings for a single interpreter at a single point in time.

Many see the possibility of a sign’s taking on multiple meanings to be inherent in Peirce’s conception of the interpretant, which he describes as a sign in itself, with its own, new interpretant. This could potentially lead to an endless chain of interpretants in a process of what

Umberto Eco has labelled “unlimited semiosis” (1976: 68-72). Introducing this concept, Eco cites one of Peirce’s definitions of a sign, in which he describes it as “anything which determines something else (its *interpretant*) to refer to an object to which itself refers (its *object*) in the same way, the interpretant becoming in turn a sign, and so on *ad infinitum*” (69). Some scholars describe these potential chains of signs and interpretants as chains of thought. Winfried Nöth, for example, writes, citing Peirce, that “since ‘every thought must address itself to some other’, the continuous process of semiosis (or thinking) can only be ‘interrupted’, but never really be ‘ended’” (1990: 43). Likewise, Turino writes of the potentially endless process of semiosis as a “train of thought”, which might be “interrupted by another chain of thought, or by arriving at a belief or conclusion” (1999: 223). Eco discusses the theoretical “final Sign” of such a process, which he posits as “not really a sign, but ... the entire semantic field as the structure connecting and correlating signs with each other” (1976: 69).

Eco goes on to discuss the “various sorts of interpretants” that might be implied by Peirce’s definitions. He celebrates the “vague” nature of Peirce’s concept of the interpretant, criticising those scholars who are “frightened” by it and “[proceed] to exorcise it by misunderstanding it” (69). He lists various types of possible interpretants, including “the equivalent (or apparently equivalent) sign-vehicle in another semiotic system”, for example a “drawing of a dog [which might] correspond to the word dog”, “the translation of the term into another language” and “an emotive association which acquires the value of an established connotation”, for example where “dog signifies <<fidelity>> (and vice versa)”. Suggesting one way of thinking about the relationship between a sign’s denotations and its connotations, he writes, “I shall assume that all the denotations of a sign-vehicle are undoubtedly its interpretants, that a connotation is the interpretant of an underlying denotation, and that a further connotation is the interpretant of the one underlying it”. However, he insists that the set of interpretants associated with any sign does not merely consist of “the entire range of denotations and connotations of a sign vehicle”, but also can include “a response, a behavioural habit determined by a sign, and many other things” (70).

Eco is not the only scholar to highlight the importance of the multiple connotations that might attach to a sign vehicle, in addition to a possible single denotation. In his essay “Myth Today”, Roland Barthes, borrowing a theoretical model from Louis Hjelmslev, distinguishes between “first-order” and “second-order” signifying systems. At the first level of signification, he highlights the “simple meaning” of signs, which he describes using the Saussurean terminology of “signifiers” and “signifieds”. This is the level at which signifiers may be said to “denote” their signifieds. Barthes notes, however, that signs of this first order may also acquire further connotations, which he describes as a kind of “second-order” signification. Introducing these two levels, Barthes writes, “A tree is a tree. Yes, of course. But a tree as expressed by Minou

Drouet [a French poet] is no longer quite a tree, it is a tree which is decorated, adapted to a certain type of consumption, laden with literary self-indulgence, revolt, images, in short with a type of social *usage* which is added to pure matter” (1991 [1957]: 109). Barthes focuses on the role of ideology in the cultural myths that can be attached to signs at this secondary level, drawing attention, for example, to the French imperialist ideology that might be associated with a picture of soldier saluting on the front of a magazine (116). (In the next chapter, I will explore some of the musical ideologies that affect the meanings attached to *ṭhumrī*.)

In his later work on semiotics, Barthes modifies his model of the relationship between denotation and connotation. In *The Subject of Semiotics* (1983) Kaja Silverman draws attention to this shift, focussing on differences between Barthes’ discussions of denotation and connotation in his books *Mythologies* and *S/Z* (1974) respectively. First, she notes that Barthes tends to limit his discussion of connotation in *Mythologies* to showing the ways in which the connotations of signs are produced by a singular, hegemonic, “monolithic” ideology. In contrast, Silverman celebrates the development of Barthes’ thought in *S/Z*, in which he allows for signs to take on multiple, potentially contradictory connotations, informed by a plurality of cultural codes. Furthermore, Silverman notes that in *S/Z* Barthes complicates the distinction he draws between denotation and connotation (and between first and second-order signification). In *Mythologies*, Barthes emphasises the primacy of denotation, or the “simple meaning” of signs, over connotation. However, in *S/Z* Barthes writes, “denotation is not the first meaning, but pretends to be so; under this illusion, it is ultimately no more than the *last* of the connotations” (Barthes 1974, quoted in Silverman 1983: 32). Chandler has summarised this, later, position of Barthes as follows: “In analysing the realist literary text Barthes came to the conclusion that connotation produces the illusion of denotation. ... Thus denotation is just another connotation. From such a perspective, denotation can be seen as no more of a natural meaning than is connotation but rather as a process of *naturalization*” (2007: 138). This reveals another aspect of the ways in which the meanings of signs become naturalised. Above, I discussed the way in which the naturalisation of signs involves a process in which signifiers are rendered transparent, such that the cultural conventions on which they are based become invisible. Barthes’ work suggests that the naturalisation of signs also involves a process by which one singular meaning becomes selected from a range of possible meanings and promoted as its primary, denotative meaning. Noting the difficulties inherent in trying to separate connotation from denotation in practice, Chandler locates the primary difference between these two kinds of signification as a matter of consensus, where “the denotational meaning of a sign would be broadly agreed upon by members of the same culture”, whereas connotations are “determined by the codes to which the interpreter has access” (139).

Examining the connotation rather than the denotation of signs is particularly appropriate for the study of music. Many describe music as non-denotational and non-propositional, pointing out the difficulties inherent in analysing the meaning of music if “music cannot lie”.

Acknowledging the illusory nature of denotation, and instead emphasising connotation, removes these difficulties and allows for a semiotic consideration of music similar to the way one might analyse language and other semiotic modes. If denotation is simply a matter of consensus and a process of naturalisation, then one might also look for evidence of this process at work in relation to music, considering how certain connotations might take priority over others in particular social situations. Following Barthes, one might further consider the political and ideological forces that influence this process. Regula Qureshi, for example, has explored the way in which social and historical factors have affected the changing connotations of a particular instrument in her work on the *sāra gī* in North Indian classical music (1997).

Other discussions of the potential for sign vehicles to take on multiple meanings focus on the possibility that the ways in which a particular sign vehicle are interpreted are contingent on its context. Barthes makes this point in “Myth Today”, when he notes that the “simple meaning” of a Latin clause in a Latin textbook (“because my name is lion”) is not the same as its “true and fundamental signification”, which, in this case, is “the presence of a certain agreement of the predicate”. That is, in the context of a grammatical textbook, this signifier takes on the additional meaning, “I am a grammatical example” (1991 [1957]: 116). Likewise in music, a single musical passage might variously be interpreted as signifying a particular character (in the context of a *leitmotif* in an opera by Wagner, for example), instrumental virtuosity, the fact that it will soon be time to put the next CD in the hi-fi, a sense of sadness or classical music in general, depending on its context and the agenda and prior experiences of its interpreter.

In reference to music, Turino describes a process of what he calls “semantic snowballing”, whereby a single sign vehicle (for instance a piece of music) continually acquires more and more meanings for a single interpreter over time. As an example of this, he takes “the song that comes to index a romantic relationship, ‘our song’”, which “may have a positive emotional salience for the lovers when things are going well”, but which “might carry both this salience and great sadness if the relationship ends in heartbreak”. He writes, “Hearing the song later in life, feelings of ‘new love’, ‘the many times together,’ and ‘heartbreak,’ might be called up simultaneously creating a complex response” (1999: 235). Turino associates the potential for “semantic snowballing” in particular with indices, which he describes as “snowballing, multileveled, polysemic, ambiguous, condensed, and personalized” (249-250). This is in line with his understanding of indices as associations generated as a function of memory, which “are not usually processed, at least initially, in terms of symbolic concepts” but rather which lead to the “experience [of] layers of feeling which will tend to remain undifferentiated and simply

felt”. He believes that the complexity of musical indices can partially explain music’s emotional power, writing, “One source for the affective power of musical indices is the fact that they are able to condense great quantities and varieties of meaning – even contradictory meanings – within a single sign” (235).

Turino also draws attention to what he labels the “multi-componential aspect of music”, such that “within any given section of music the timbre may function as an icon or index with certain effects” and “the rhythm, meter, tempo, mode, melodic shape, and texture likewise may each function as discrete signs that complement, chafe, or contradict the other signs sounding at the same time” (1999: 237). He notes that this “multiplicity of potentially meaningful parameters sounding simultaneously” (249) renders music a “particularly rich semiotic mode” (237).

Turino is not alone in drawing attention to the polysemic nature of music in particular. Lousie Meintjes (1990), for example, has adopted a semiotic perspective in order to explore the different meanings that different interpreters perceive in Paul Simon’s album *Graceland*. Nicola Dibben has discussed the “polysemic character” of some popular music which, she argues, makes it “potentially empowering and resistant” (1999: 344).

While acknowledging that signs may take on numerous different meanings and connotations, many semioticians note that some of these meanings are more widely shared than others in particular social situations. Umberto Eco theorises the role of codes in limiting the potential meanings that any particular sign vehicle may take on. A number of semioticians have drawn attention to the social codes through which signs can be understood, with the effect that certain signs have taken on common, shared meanings for groups of people with common experiences. In ethnomusicology, the idea of shared, “insider” understanding of music informed the so-called “emic etic debate”.

In my study of *ṭhumrī*, I have tried to identify some of the multiple connotations that are associated with recurring musical features in the genre. I have chosen to prioritise the meanings that cultural insiders attach to the genre, focussing in particular on statements made by musicians and music connoisseurs. Influenced by the work of Barthes, I am interested in the cultural myths that surround particular musical signs in *ṭhumrī* and in the ways in which specific musical signs might be related to broader social ideologies. In this chapter and the next, I consider the way in which *ṭhumrī*’s social context inflects the meanings evoked by its musical content. In the next chapter in particular, I emphasise the multiple, different, interacting musical ideologies that inform different musicians’ and listeners’ understandings of *ṭhumrī* style. There I also consider how an awareness of *ṭhumrī*’s shared meanings helps to make sense of some of the stylistic decisions that musicians have made over the past few decades.

Topic theory

Topic theory originated in the work of Leonard Ratner on eighteenth-century Western classical music and is a semiotic approach to the analysis of conventional musical signs. Ratner wrote of composers' use of a "thesaurus of characteristic figures", which derived from early eighteenth-century music's "contacts with worship, poetry, drama, entertainment, dance, ceremony, the military, the hunt, and the life of the lower classes". He labelled these figures "topics – subjects for musical discourse" (1980:9). Ratner's ideas about musical topics have been taken up by a number of other scholars, including Kofi Agawu (1991), Wye Allanbrook (1983, 1992, 2002) and Robert Hatten (1994, 2004) among others. Although topic theory developed primarily as a way of making sense of what Dean Sutcliffe calls the "conspicuous variety" of eighteenth-century music (2009:471), topic theory has also been applied to other repertoires, including nineteenth-century Western classical music (Agawu 2009.)

Topic theorists describe topics as types of musical signs, which evoked particular musical and/or extra-musical connotations for musically literate eighteenth-century listeners and composers (see Agawu 1991, introduction). They consist of sets of distinctive musical features that appear in short passages of music, perhaps lasting only a few bars in performance. In the introduction to his *Music as Discourse*, Agawu lists some typical examples of eighteenth-century topics: these include "fugue", "waltz", "hunt", "march", "pastorale" and "horn call" (2009: 43-44). Since topics can refer to a variety of extra-musical themes, specific to their particular cultural location (for example "hunt"), studying topics offers music analysts a way of examining the traces embedded in music of that music's particular cultural and social circumstances. In other words, studying musical topics is one way of highlighting what Agawu calls "social sediment in classic music" (2009:42).

A number of aspects of topic theory can usefully be applied to the analysis of signs in *ṭhumrī*. Topic theory relies on the idea that particular musical features can carry "extra-musical" connotations that are to some extent shared amongst a particular community of listeners and that are established at least in part by social convention. Likewise I will suggest that certain sets of musical features in *ṭhumrī* carry shared associations within communities of musicians and music-lovers, that is, for "insiders" in the musical culture of North Indian classical music. Based on my fieldwork interviews and a variety of written sources, I will identify a number of musical signs in *ṭhumrī*, considering the shared significance they carry for groups of musicians and listeners. Furthermore, work on musical topics is primarily music-analytical in nature, involving detailed consideration of the way in which musical signs appear in individual pieces of music. As such, it serves as a good model for my semiotic analysis of *ṭhumrī*. Like the topic theorists, I will attempt here to use theories of semiotics in order to understand the precise nuances of

particular musical features, considering ways of situating them within their wider cultural and social environments.

Semiotic approaches to North Indian classical music

Jose Luis Martinez' book *Semiosis in Hindustani Music* (2001 [1997]) is an in-depth consideration of the applicability of Peircean semiotics to music in general and Indian classical music in particular. He examines various types of signs in North Indian classical music and analyses some of the semiotic implications of classical Indian aesthetics, as revealed in historical treatises. Particularly enlightening is Martinez' insight that the Peircean triadic model of sign function, involving a representamen or sign vehicle, an object and an interpretant, shares features with the way in which many Indian philosophers and aestheticians have theorised the relationship between *rāga* (or, by extension, music), *bhāva* (emotion) and *rasa* (literally "taste", the experience which music generates for its listeners). In his description, *rāga*, or the "musical sign" acts as a representamen, which refers to *bhāva*, its object, thereby generating *rasa*, its interpretant, in the listener (2001 [1997]: 334-336). He explores the richness of Indian classical music's signification in a variety of other ways. He highlights, for example, the variety of meanings which any particular *rāg* might evoke, including "musical concepts, natural phenomena of the Indian subcontinent ..., the multiplicity of Indian cultural manifestations, philosophical and religious beliefs, categories of feeling, and so on". Thus, he writes, *rāg Miṣā Kī Malhār* signifies the monsoon season, which is "marked by the refreshment that follows the heat of summer" and therefore "human contentment". However, it can also signify "a serious mood", since "those who are separated from loved ones may feel gloomy". Also, he notes, the *rāg* signifies the historical musician Tansen, the presumed inventor of the *rāg*. On top of this, Martinez argues that other "issues of signification" include "the way a *rāga* is structured, performed, perceived, enjoyed, and conceptualized in music theory" (2001 [1997]: 2-3). Elsewhere, Martinez draws attention to the multiple meanings and responses that might be evoked by the performance of a single composition; in this case, he argues, they might include an association with "Indian music" and, by extension, Indian Independence, as well as the urge to dance (2001 [1997]: 73, 77). Just as Turino substantiates his discussion of Peircean sign classifications in music with numerous examples, so Martinez suggests instances from Indian classical music of Peirce's different sign types (2001 [1997]: 69-79).

Martinez identifies three different "fields" of signification within which to situate his discussion. The first, "intrinsic musical semiosis", concerns what Martinez labels "internal musical signification", by which he refers to the sounds and structures of music (including what Jean-Jacques Nattiez would call the "neutral level"), regardless of any extra-musical association, or the effect they have on their interpreters. Martinez' second field is "musical reference", which involves the relationships between musical signs and their (potentially extra-

musical) objects. Amongst other things, Martinez draws attention to the way in which particular music might evoke bird calls and the “jingling of a lady’s ankle bells” (114-115). His third field is “musical interpretation”, which “deals with the action of musical signs in an existing or potential mind” (81-83).

Martinez’ study is a broad overview of Peircean semiotics and its applicability to Indian classical music. He restricts most of his discussion to the consideration of classical genres, only briefly mentioning semi-classical ones such as *ṭhumrī*. This general study demonstrates the promise of applying theories of semiotics to North Indian classical music and opens the door for future, more specific studies, such as the one I attempt in this thesis. I have already dealt with aspects of “intrinsic musical semiosis” in *ṭhumrī* in the last chapter, in which I considered the genre’s formulaic building blocks. When formulas are repeated or particular melodic units are successively varied in the context of what I label “successive variation strategies”, part of their semiotic function is to remind the listener of their previous occurrences. Each subsequent instance of a particular chunk of musical material thus refers back to its own previous instances as the objects of processes of semiosis. The occurrence in *ṭhumrī* of musical material with a beginning, middle or ending function is another manifestation of Martinez’ “intrinsic musical semiosis”. Here, one particular musical event might signal to the listener that a particular phrase is coming to an end, serving as a structural landmark and signifying “ending”. Thus musical syntax, too, participates in processes of semiosis. There would seem to be potential for using concepts from semiotics in order to make sense of other “internal” structural features of *ṭhumrī*, too, but this is beyond the scope of this chapter. There is also no space here to consider issues in Martinez’ field of “musical interpretation”, in which he looks at listeners’ responses to music. (However, I will consider the experience of the listener of a *ṭhumrī* performance in Chapter 5, where I examine one singer’s verbal responses to one of her own performances, although not in specifically Peircean semiotic terms.) In Martinez’ terminology, this chapter will focus largely on the field of “musical reference”, and in particular on the extra-musical and emotional connotations of musical features.

Martinez is not the only scholar to have applied theories of semiotics to North Indian classical music. In her article, “The Lotus and the King: Imagery, Gesture and Meaning in a Hindustani *Rāg*” (2009), Laura Leante takes a semiotic approach in order to examine the meanings and connotations surrounding one particular *rāg*, *Śrī rāg*. Based on her extensive fieldwork, she identifies shared associations carried by this *rāg* for different North Indian classical musicians, noting that it evokes “a number of quite consistent meanings and moods” (197). She explores a relationship between some of these associations and the gestures used by musicians when they perform and talk about the *rāg*, drawing attention to a hand gesture that musicians often use in conjunction with a particular musical gesture, characteristic of the *rāg*. Her methodology is

influenced by the work of Phillip Tagg on semiotics and popular music: she usefully adopts his concept of a “kinetic anaphone” in order explain the linking of sound, gesture and imagery in this particular feature of North Indian classical music (2009: 187-188).¹⁶ Leante’s approach brings together different semiotic modes (speech, musical performance and bodily gestures) and shows ways in which they interact in order to create a “web of potential meanings” surrounding *Śrī rāg*, “from which musicians draw in various ways to build their own image of the *rāg*” (192).

Leante’s observations are grounded not only in ethnographic interviews, but also in her close analysis of audiovisual recordings of musical performances. This allows her to comment on the significance of particular musical features of the performances she studies. Her insights would seem be of great benefit to analysts interested in doing detailed, close readings of performances of *Śrī rāg*; if adopted more widely, her approach, which focuses on the culturally embedded meanings that musicians attach to particular musical features, promises to illuminate music-analytical understandings of North Indian classical music in general.

Like Leante, I am interested in what North Indian classical music means to the people who perform and listen to it. Also like Leante, my observations are based primarily on statements made by musicians themselves; where possible, I have tried to ask musicians to comment on their own recordings. (Unlike in Leante’s work, however, I was not able to supplement this with an examination of musicians’ bodily gestures.) In the next section, referring to comments about *ṭhumrī* by musicians and connoisseurs in face-to-face interviews and written sources, in conjunction with my own close analysis of *ṭhumrī* recordings, I will discuss some of the most common ways in which musicians and listeners consider *ṭhumrī* to be meaningful. I will then identify certain specific examples of musical signs in *ṭhumrī*, analysing the way they occur in performance.

The meaning of music in discourse about *ṭhumrī*

When they talk about the meaning or significance of *ṭhumrī*’s musical content, most musicians and connoisseurs primarily emphasise its relationship with the lyrics it sets. This is in line with the commonly shared opinion that the words are of more importance in *ṭhumrī* than in the classical genres *khyāl* and *dhrupad*. According to most *ṭhumrī* singers, the singer must always take special care to ensure that *ṭhumrī*’s lyrics are clear and intelligible. *Ṭhumrī* differs in this respect from *khyāl* and *dhrupad*, in which singers may sing words or even particular syllables

¹⁶ Tagg defines an anaphone as a musical version of an analogy, such that while an analogy involves the imitation of “existing models” in words, an anaphone involves imitation in the form of “(musical) sounds”. For an anaphone to be a “kinetic anaphone”, the object being imitated in music must be some kind of movement (1992: 3).

out of order, so as to render their meaning nonsensical, or in such a way that the precise words sung are impossible to discern. Shubhra Guha, along with many other singers, spoke about this when she described *ṭhumrī* to me. She even stressed the importance of not prolonging any syllables which contain short vowels, stating that only long vowels should be prolonged in musical improvisation, so as not to distort the lyrics (2010, personal communication). Similarly, S. V. Gokhale writes, “A Thumri singer has to clearly enunciate the text, and at the same time, to convey the import with its various shades of meaning. Therefore, attention is paid to clarity and smoothness of pronunciation” (1990: 4).

Ṭhumrī’s lyrics are almost always written from a first-person, female perspective and are normally addressed either to a male lover or a female confidante. Their primary themes are love and separation from a beloved. They are set in a historical, rural environment and may explicitly refer to Krishna as the beloved and his consort Radha or a *gopī* (one of Krishna’s milkmaid lovers) as the first-person protagonist. Even if *ṭhumrī*’s lyrics do not make the identity of their protagonists explicit, many singers nevertheless often understand them to be about love for Krishna, or an analogy for love for Krishna. In her penetrating study of *ṭhumrī* lyrics, Lalita du Perron notes that *ṭhumrī*’s typical lyrics, although they might initially seem “short, predictable, formulaic [and] even somewhat superficial” (2007: 10), nevertheless “invite the audience to engage with realms far beyond [their] immediate lexical scope” (11). Thus, for knowledgeable listeners, “*ṭhumrī* lyrics are filled with allusion to images that are not explicitly present in the text”, but rather “are more substantially located within North Indian cultural tradition, and Krishnaite mythology in particular”. She gives as an example of this the word “*ṭhāre*”, meaning “standing”, which, she writes, “is so closely associated with descriptions of Krishna in bhakti literature that for many people the mere inclusion of the word will conjure up a range of images relating to the cowherd-god, so that the import of the phrase ‘*ṭhāre raho*’ (‘keep standing’) is much wider than its lexical meaning” (14). Likewise, she later writes, “The phrase ‘*dekhe bina nahī caina*’ (‘without seeing [you] I have no peace’) may, in a *ṭhumrī* environment, be predictable, formulaic and unoriginal, but it achieves its objective of tapping into a cultural consciousness which has been nurtured by the images of the archetypal lover and his relationship with the heroine that have pervaded North Indian art forms for more than a thousand years” (122).

In terms of semiotics, this description of *ṭhumrī*’s lyrics highlights the importance of considering the multiple connotations that signs (in this case linguistic signs) evoke. In the case of *ṭhumrī*, Perron suggests, many of these connotations will be shared by listeners who are already “familiar with the layout of the *ṭhumrī* universe” (122), for whom even simple linguistic formulas will conjure up entire scenarios and a particular historical/mythical setting, as well as emotional associations. (This complicates the assertion, discussed above, that the distinction

between denotation and connotation is that denotation is culturally agreed upon, while connotation is a question of personal associations and memories: in this case, connotations are shared within particular social groups, too.) A further implication of Perron's description is that *thumrī*'s lyrics can only properly be appreciated by such listeners, since a certain level of prior expertise is required in order to de-code their meanings. Later in the thesis, I will discuss ideas about connoisseurship and expert listeners in relation to the musical signification of *thumrī*. In particular, I will explore an apparent contradiction in musicians' descriptions of the genre, in which they assert both that *thumrī* is a natural, untrained outpouring of emotion, universally understandable and also, in contrast, that only connoisseurs are capable of properly grasping the nuances of the genre.

When I asked musicians about the significance of *thumrī*'s musical features, many spoke of music's role in depicting the scene suggested by the lyrics. Tulika Ghosh, for example, told me about how she describes in music the festival of *Holī*, a spring-time festival associated with games in which people throw coloured powders at each other:

If you are singing a *thumrī*, you'd better imagine the entire scene that is happening in front of you. It's only then that each word carries the meaning and brings forth the expression. It's like visualising. Like say you are describing a *holī*, you have to visualise Krishna and Radha playing the *holī* and all the *sakhīs* and – what is the scene? What are the colours that are being thrown into the air? And if you don't imagine that colour, how are you going to paint that? And you have to paint that only with your voice, with sounds and not with actual paints. You have to literally create a painting with your voice (2011, personal communication).

Many other singers expressed similar sentiments in interview. I will discuss examples of this kind of musical signification later in this chapter.

As well as depicting the scene suggested by *thumrī*'s text, many musicians also highlight music's role in representing the emotions of the heroine of the text.¹⁷ For many singers and connoisseurs, much of the beauty of *thumrī* lies in the singer's musical portrayal of the sadness of a woman who is separated from her lover, or who is pleading with her lover not to leave her. S.V. Gokhale argues that this is the most important function of *thumrī*'s music, over and above any scene-setting function. He writes that although “there may be a passing reference to an event or incident, for example, the end of the rainy season or the coming of spring, the loss of an ornament, the pitcher of water being broken, the tingle of anklets in the silence of the night, the derisive words of in-laws, and so on”, nevertheless “the incidents are not narrated in detail.” He continues, “Narration is not the main objective, but rather, depiction of the mental-emotional results of the events or incidents” (1990: 2). (I will discuss the significance of the musical

¹⁷ Peter Manuel refers to these two characteristics as two “levels” of *bol banāo*. In his description, “word-painting”, in which “the vocalist consciously endeavors to suggest or portray a particular textual image through singing” is the first level of *bol banāo* (1989: 137), while, at the second level, “the artist endeavors to express a single *bol*, or text phrase, in different, identifiable, specific shades of emotion, such as reproach, melting sorrow, and the like” (138).

characterisation of the heroine and the depiction of her emotions in *ṭhumrī* further in Chapter 5, where I consider these issues from the perspective of gender.)

The idea that *ṭhumrī*'s music ought to depict the emotions of the protagonist informs *ṭhumrī*'s characteristic improvisational technique, *bol banāo*.¹⁸ *Bol banāo*, sometimes described as a kind of “text elaboration” is the process by which a singer sings different versions of the same lyrics to different melodic settings. Musicians and listeners celebrate *bol banāo* as the definitive musical characteristic of the *bol banāo ṭhumrī*. Many musicians speak in particular of the emotional significance of *bol banāo*, in which each different melodic setting of a particular text is designed to bring out different emotional nuances inherent in that text. Thus the musician and musicologist Sunil Bose writes that “The beauty of the *thumri* style of singing lies in the artist’s ability to convey musically as many shades of meaning as the words of the song can bear” (1990: 55).

In my lessons, my teacher would often demonstrate this at length, showing numerous different ways of singing a particular chunk of text, each with different emotional connotations. Peter Manuel gives a detailed example of how this might work in performance, based on his interview with the singer Anil Biswas. Manuel transcribes Biswas’ demonstration of four melodic settings of a particular line of text, meaning, “Go, I won’t speak to you.” He notes that “this line is sufficiently broad and simple as to accommodate a wide variety of expressive interpretations.” Biswas describes his first setting as “pouting”; Manuel notes that its musical setting is “appropriately reserved, centering in the lower portion of the octave”. Manuel describes Biswas’ second version as rendered “in a manner suggesting scorn, or reproach”, suggesting that Biswas’ particular choice of notes (omitting R, the second scale degree) “tends to render the phrases resolute and strong in character”. In the third version of this line of text, Manuel writes, “Biswas portrays sadness and resignation”. Manuel describes the last setting of the texts as “the expression of anger, rising dramatically to the upper Sa ... and introducing a fast forceful *tān*”. He points out that, in addition to a singers’ choice of notes, “the use of dynamic and timbral variation to heighten dramatic effect is also a characteristic device of *ṭhumrī*” (1989: 138-140). As is typical in singers’ demonstrations of *bol banāo*, musical variety here is associated with different emotions inherent in the lyrics.¹⁹

Many draw links between the process of *bol banāo* and classical dance. In the introduction to this thesis, I discussed the social reasons why, in the early decades of the twentieth century,

¹⁸ In the last chapter, I discussed ways in which *bol banāo* affords the kinds of displays of ingenuity in musical variation that are central to the aesthetic of *ṭhumrī*: there is, however, also an emotional aspect to this process.

¹⁹ The emotional multiplicity produced by such passages of *bol banāo* parallels the “topical multiplicity” that Wye Allanbrook and others have identified in eighteenth-century Western classical music (2002: 196).

thumrī singers ceased dancing and using formalised gestures during their performances. The dance traditions that had been associated with courtesans, however, did not die out, but rather survived, like music, in the form of national, classical art forms, performed in public for middle-class audiences. The dance that had existed alongside *thumrī*, for example, now exists as *kathak* dance. In describing the musical process of *bol banāo* in *thumrī*, many singers tell a common historical narrative about its origins, noting its links with dance. They hark back to a time in the past when courtesans both sang and also danced *thumrī*. Making comparisons with classical dance, they suggest that music now serves as a substitute for the different realisations of the lyrics that might be acted out in a *kathak* performance. The *thumrī* singer and scholar Vidya Rao gives a typical description. She writes that the “separation [of dance from singing] strikes at the very heart of Thumri, which, denied a body (literally), now has to find ways of expressing its ‘dancing’ nature through the voice alone – it has now to ‘dance with the voice’”. She notes that musicians treat their ability to do this “as a matter of pride”, drawing attention to the skill it involves (1996: 305). The singer Savita Devi tells a similar story, this time suggesting that *thumrī*’s music now replaces the gestural aspects (*abhinaya*) of *thumrī*’s former incarnation. She writes that in the past *abhinaya* “expressed the emotions the singer attempted to arouse and accentuated the visual appeal of the performance”. Later, however, singers “began feeling strongly that the singing itself should evoke the emotions”, with the result that “*abhinaya* was redundant” (2000: 102).

Ashwini Bhide Deshpande told me in interview that she imagines the way *thumrī* might be danced when she sings melodic improvisations. She said that in order to sing *thumrī*, “it’s very important that you have seen good dancers and how they emote through dance”. Furthermore, at the moment of performance, she said, “I see the dancer in front of me. ... I imagine ... I see the dancer in front of my eyes. I follow his dance movements and accordingly I make my variations.” She also spoke with praise about the ongoing collaboration between the singer Girija Devi and the renowned *kathak* dancer Birju Maharaj.²⁰ She was one of a number of singers who mentioned Birju Maharaj when talking about *thumrī*’s connection with dance. Tulika Ghosh also mentioned him when she described *thumrī* to me. She said,

If you can imagine when Birju Maharaj just sings one line and dances, you forget it’s just an almost eighty-year-old man standing there, doing expression. You can only see Krishna and Radha over there. ... So that’s what I feel about *thumrī*. You can literally bring out the expressions, what you feel a dancer would be doing. And when you sing that, the audience also should be able to imagine that expression.

²⁰ They have worked together on a number of events at which Girija Devi sings *thumrī* and Birju Maharaj dances *kathak*, sometimes simultaneously noting that *thumrī* and *kathak* used to be performed by the same group of people. I attended one such concert in Delhi in 2010.

Projesh Banerjee, too, suggests parallels between musical gestures in *ṭhumrī* and the gestures of dance in his book, *Dance in Thumri* (1986). (I will discuss the further significance of the historical narratives singers tell about *ṭhumrī* in Chapter 4.)

When my teacher talks about *ṭhumrī*, she sometimes offers her pupils a psychological explanation for the order of different musical events in passages of *bol banāo*, talking about how it might represent the way in which the emotions of a heroine might change and develop over time. When she was teaching me and other pupils the *ṭhumrī*, “*Itnī arāja morī māna*”, in which the heroine asks her lover not to leave her, she would, for example, account for the changing musical settings of the first line by describing the changing emotions of the heroine. First, the heroine would be flirtatious, coyly attempting to persuade her lover to stay. On seeing this attempt fail, she would adopt a pleading tone and phrase her requests more forcefully. Then she would become increasingly desperate and frustrated, eventually becoming angry. Finally, resigned to the fact that her lover was not going to stay, she would sing the line so as to express her sadness and grief. This kind of long-term psychological narrative can provide structure to entire *ṭhumrī* performances. Sharma once demonstrated this to some of her other pupils and me in an impromptu performance of the *ṭhumrī* “*Nāhaka lāe gavanavā*”. Sharma’s *ṭhumrī* performances often convey this particular sequence of emotions or similar (in which a heroine starts flirtatiously and then becomes increasingly desperate before ending sadly), in a wide variety of different compositions and *rāgs*. Sometimes, Sharma talks of an emotional significance to the *laggī*, the lively, faster concluding portion of a *ṭhumrī* performance. There, she says, the heroine finally forgets about all her troubles and gets consumed in the joy of the music.

Thinking about the gradually changing emotions of a heroine helped me and one of my fellow pupils to remember the order of the numerous “improvisations” that Sharma had us memorise for the *ṭhumrī* “*Itnī arāja morī mān*”. In this case, the increasingly heightened emotional state of the heroine was depicted in phrases involving an ever-widening melodic range. Here, the idea that the music was describing the progression of emotions experienced by a heroine provided a psychological rationale not only for the process of *bol banāo*, but also for the melodic process of *vistār*. A similar sequence of emotions also occurs in the demonstration of *bol banāo* by Anil Biswas that Peter Manuel describes (1989: 138-140). In the terms I suggested in the last chapter, one might consider this emotional sequence an example of a formulaic musical strategy, which recurs in renditions of different compositions and different *rāgs*, providing a common large-scale structure to the performances.

In appealing to psychology in order to explain the succession of different musical figures in *ṭhumrī*, singers construct *ṭhumrī*’s musical content as emotionally realistic (despite the lack of realism that results from its distant historical or mythological setting). For many singers,

including my teacher, *ṭhumrī*'s emotional realism is also associated with idea that, in *ṭhumrī*, singers should express in music emotions that derive from their own real-life experience. Speaking about the importance of emotional authenticity in *ṭhumrī* performance, many singers have told me anecdotes related to the recurring theme that it is impossible to sing *ṭhumrī* successfully without first having fallen in love. In his "appraisal" of *ṭhumrī*, Mohan Nadkarni writes that "Thumri has been described as the expression of the singer's soul and temperament" (1990: 40). The classical singer Ashwini Bhide Deshpande spoke to me about the importance of thinking about analogous situations in one's own life to those described in the *ṭhumrī* one is singing. She mentioned in particular those *ṭhumrīs* in which a heroine is sad about the absence of a lover, who is with a rival: she suggested that, for a modern-day woman, it might be traffic and the difficulties of the long working day (and not a rival) that keeps one away from one's spouse, but that one might be able to draw upon the emotions experienced in this comparable, modern-day situation when singing *ṭhumrīs* that concern events that one could never possibly have experienced in real life.

Likewise in biographies of *ṭhumrī* singers and other fan literature, writers often draw attention to tragic circumstances in singers' lives as a way of explaining the emotion inherent in their singing. In her biography of her mother, Siddheshwari Devi, Savita Devi writes, "She successfully hid her sorrows behind her laughter, and her pain was reflected in her music" (2000: 64). Later she writes of her mother's "lonely childhood", which prompted her to "[reach] out to Krishna, the friend and deity of [her] childhood", a "longing for union" that later influenced her *ṭhumrī* singing. She quotes her mother as saying, "It was never difficult for me to recreate the emotions of loneliness and the essence of incompleteness that comes from being without love" (109). Shanti Hiranand, similarly, writes of the real emotions which, she feels, inform (her teacher) Begum Akhtar's singing. Describing her time spent with Akhtar, she writes, "Sometimes she would take a two-line *dadra* and sing for an entire day ... alternately weeping tears of transient joy and the deepest sorrow. I remember she was singing this particular *dadra*, 'Abke sawan ghar aaja...', when she burst into tears and I was extremely awkward, not knowing exactly how to respond. She dried her tears after a while and said to me, 'You are too young to understand these things'" (2005: 15). Accounting for this sadness, she writes that "the fact that ... her father's family never socially accepted her ... left a deep emotional void in [her] mind" (82). She also narrates Akhtar's temporary addiction to pathedine injections, writing, "She ... felt an intense need to plumb the depths of depravity at times." She continues, "I suspect this is where she drew her inspiration to sing" (80-81).

Peter Manuel situates *ṭhumrī*'s texts within the framework of heroine types (*nāyikā-bheda*) suggested in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, an ancient Sanskrit treatise on dramaturgy written by Bharata Muni. He describes the eight such "basic heroine-types" that appear in Bharata Muni's

description, which, he writes “constituted the framework for subsequent dramas and poems, including contemporary *ṭhumrī* texts” (1989: 9). He notes that these basic types can be further sub-divided, producing roughly 385 heroine-types in total. Manuel then suggests examples of *ṭhumrī* texts that fit each of the eight major categories of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, albeit with the caveat that “many, if not most *ṭhumrīs* contain elements of more than one sub-type and conversely, many do not fit nicely into any of the eight groups” (10-16). Assessing the continued relevance of heroine-types of modern-day *ṭhumrī* performance, Manuel notes that “*ṭhumrī* singers and composers do not appear to have been preoccupied with systematically portraying all the 385 heroine-types”. However, he points out, “some educated present-day singers like Naina Devi and Rita Gangoly do stress the relevance and importance of the eight basic heroine-types in *ṭhumrī*” (10).

Lalita du Perron also discusses the relevance of theories of *nāyikā-bheda* to modern-day *ṭhumrī*. She suggests that for some performers being “able to recognise the myriad possibilities of emotional expression present in a phrase” will “[entail] a reliance on the *nāyikā-bheda* model of the *Nāṭya Śāstra*, in which the various emotional states of the heroine are delineated”. However, she argues that this model has only limited applicability to modern-day performance. Unlike Manuel, she believes that “only two or three of the *nāyikās* of the *Nāṭya Śāstra* are easily identified in *ṭhumrī* texts, complicating if not prohibiting the application of this model to contemporary *ṭhumrī*”. Furthermore, she writes, “the need for a wide range of interpretative options in *bol banāv ṭhumrī* ... limits the usefulness of the *nāyikā-bheda* model, as the identification of the heroine with one narrowly defined *nāyikā* imposes an unnecessary limitation on the scope of the genre” (2007: 7).

In my own discussions with *ṭhumrī* singers, a number of musicians mentioned *nāyikā-bheda*, but none seemed to credit the framework of heroine types with having a major influence on their *ṭhumrī* style. When talking about the heroine of a particular performance or composition, they were much more likely to explain her emotions as a result of the particulars of her circumstances and characterise them as realistic, than classify her according to an ancient heroine type. As Perron points out, “many singers feel that as appropriate emotional expression is the essence of a successful *ṭhumrī* performance, the key to this is awareness of women’s experiences in real life and emotional maturity, rather than ‘bookish’ knowledge of Sanskrit theories” (2007: 46). Nevertheless, these heroine types may well form part of the way in which *ṭhumrī* is meaningful for certain singers and audience members. Vidya Rao, for example, describes the way in which the protagonist in a *ṭhumrī* may shift between different *nāyikā* types during a single performance (1990: WS-34). Perron writes of the enthusiasm for *nāyikā-bheda* of the singer and musicologist Aneeta Sen, who gave a concert in which she illustrated each of the eight basic heroine types with musical examples, including some compositions which she

herself had composed. For listeners who are predisposed to hearing heroine-types in *ṭhumrī*, performances may well function as signs of those heroine-types; for many others, however, they will not.²¹ I will discuss the characterisation of *ṭhumrī*'s heroine further in Chapter 5, where I consider its relationship with the social construction of gender norms.

Discursively, more often than not, musical signs in *ṭhumrī* are constructed as highly motivated: they are constructed specifically as being closely determined by the content of the text. When singers evoke a sense of synaesthesia in describing music's ability to "paint" the scene suggested by the text, they construct *ṭhumrī*'s representational signs as iconic. Meanwhile, by emphasising the emotional authenticity necessary for successful *ṭhumrī* performances, singers construct the musical signs of emotion in *ṭhumrī* as indices, which occur only as a result of the internal emotional disposition or experiences of the performer. Using Peirce's terminology in the same way as Turino, these signs can further be described as "dicent-indices", since they are interpreted as being causally related to the emotional state of the singer and a truthful expression of it. As Shubhra Guha said to me, talking of the way in which *ṭhumrī* is different from *khyāl*, "It is a question of feelings: unless you feel the words, the mood will not come [and] it will not have any impact [on] the listeners". (In Turino's formulation, if they were interpreted as merely representing the emotions of an imaginary heroine, as, for example, if a listener were to interpret a performance as representative of a theoretical heroine-type, these musical signs would be rhemes.) In the case of both apparent musical iconicity and also indexicality in *ṭhumrī*, the genre's musical signification is naturalised in discourse, in the commentary by singers and connoisseurs that surrounds *ṭhumrī* performances.

In spite of this, singers and listeners do also sometimes note the conventional (that is, "symbolic") nature of musical signs in *ṭhumrī*. This informs their frequent claim that *ṭhumrī* is best understood by musical connoisseurs or by "knowledgeable" listeners. Many concert venues put on *ṭhumrī* "lecture-demonstrations" of *ṭhumrī*, in addition to ordinary concerts, which appeal to listeners who wish to obtain expertise in Indian classical music in order to enhance their listening experience. In a review of one such lecture-demonstration about both *ṭhumrī* and *khyāl* given in 1978, a music critic for the *Times of India* applauds the "enthusiastic listener participation in the ... programme" as "a measure of the growing eagerness of our educated connoisseurs to understand and appreciate the aesthetic aspects of the two styles, the deeper values of their content and presentation" (25th July, 1978). This implication of this is that not all

²¹ Perron suggests a social motivation for some singers' insistence on the relevance of *nāyikā-bheda* to *ṭhumrī*: she notes that the application of ancient models to *ṭhumrī* is "readily combined with the desire to locate the genre in a sanskrit framework" (2007: 7). Later, she suggests that performers are more likely to feel that they benefit from thinking about heroine types if they hail from the "educated middle classes", rather than families of traditional musicians, since "it may be that they find it easier to relate to the material through theory" (46). I will discuss some of the wider social motivations that inform statements about *ṭhumrī* in the next chapter: this will include a consideration of classicising discourses about *ṭhumrī*, in which value is attached to abstract theoretical frameworks.

of the significance of a *ṭhumrī* performance is natural, universal or obvious (in other words, highly motivated), but rather can only be appreciated after a process of education. A similar view of signification in *ṭhumrī* informs the music critic S. Kalidas' assertion that what he believes to be the decreasing number of *ṭhumrī* connoisseurs puts the genre's continuing survival at risk. He writes that "as initiated connoisseurs give way to the vicarious hordes, the *thumri* is surely an endangered species" (*Times of India*, January 19th, 1992).

In the next section of this chapter, I will discuss particular examples of musical signs in *ṭhumrī*. My identification of these signs is based on a variety of primary sources, including extensive fieldwork interviews with North Indian classical musicians. I will draw attention to meanings that my informants attributed to specific musical features in *ṭhumrī* and argue that the meaningful nature of *ṭhumrī* style can be modelled by the functioning of signs. Like the "topics" identified by scholars who study Western classical music, these signs consist of sets of musical characteristics with particular musical and extra-musical connotations, which occur in short passages within larger performances. I will consider both musical signs that in some way "paint" the physical world of the lyrics and also musical signifiers of emotion. Taking a music-analytical approach, I will examine their occurrence in *ṭhumrī* performances from throughout the twentieth century. Like Monelle in his discussion of musical icons in Western classical music, I will show ways in which apparently iconic and indexical signs in *ṭhumrī* are largely reliant on culturally specific conventions concerning musical representation, despite their social construction as highly motivated. In the next chapter, I will consider the wider social significance of the social construction of *ṭhumrī* as highly motivated and of the (apparently contradictory) idea that understanding *ṭhumrī* is dependent on being an expert listener and musically knowledgeable. I will argue that these two ideas are the result of competing discourses about the genre, which produce conflicting ideas about the kinds of signification it involves.

Musical signs in *ṭhumrī*

Word-painting and the musical representation of natural phenomena

When they talk about *ṭhumrī*, singers often draw attention to ways in which the musical features of their performances represent aspects of the physical world in which *ṭhumrī* is set. In his discussion of this musical phenomenon in *ṭhumrī*, Peter Manuel labels this technique "word-painting", borrowing the term from descriptions of Western classical music, where it describes a very similar feature (1989: 137-142). Manuel gives a detailed example of how this might occur in performance, as demonstrated by the singer Munnawar Ali Khan to the musicologist Nazir Jairazbhoy in interview. Manuel draws attention to three instances of word-painting in this

demonstration. First, in the context of a line in which the women of Braj are described as searching for Krishna, he writes that “Munnawar endeavours to convey the impression of “searching” – “*dhunde*” – by performing long, sinuous melismas on that word.” Second, he draws attention to the singer’s evocation of the idea of Krishna, writing that “while the lively melismas may again suggest the playfulness of Krishna, the primary intent is to portray the image of the flautist by means of a modulation to *rāga* Pahārī, a folk-derived melody often associated, in the listeners’ minds, with flute music from the Punjab and Himachal hills, where that instrument and mode predominate”. Third, in a line of text describing Krishna playing with the heroine’s heart “as though it were a ball”, Manuel notes that “playful runs” can “suggest the frivolity of the game and, more specifically, the erratic bouncing of the ball” (137).

Sunanda Sharma frequently demonstrated examples of word-painting when she was teaching me how to sing *ṭhumrī* and other semi-classical genres. She never, however, spoke about this in relation to *khyāl*. On one occasion, Sharma was teaching me a *kajrī* (a semi-classical genre normally associated with the monsoon) which started with the words “*jhīr jhīr*”. Sharma instructed me to sing the words “*jhīr jhīr*”, referring to raindrops, in a delicate, staccato manner, so as to evoke the falling of raindrops in a puddle.

This was not the only time that Sharma spoke about music’s capacity to represent water and different types of rain. In an interview on a different occasion, Sharma and I listened together to her recording of the *ṭhumrī* “*He mā, kārī badariyā barase*”. During this interview, she commented on two instances of word-painting in her performance. Figure 3.1 shows an extract that comes just over four minutes into the performance. Note the florid way in which Sharma renders the word “*barase*”, meaning rain. After hearing this, Sharma said that her singing described “the way it’s raining”.

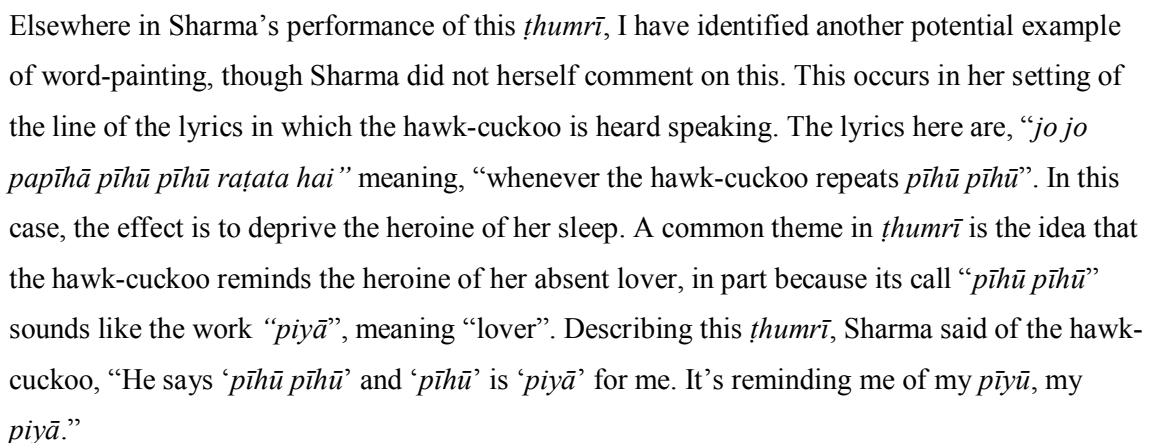
Figure 3.1, extract from Sharma (2003 [2002]), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg mīśra Deś*, 04:24 to 04:38.

Tāl = *tīntāl*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A#. See CD 1, track 50.



According to Sharma, paying attention to bringing out aspects of the natural world in *ṭhumrī* is something which she learned from her teacher, Girija Devi. Sharma told me about how this was part of Devi’s teaching, in another example concerning the musical depiction of rain. She remembers that Devi once dragged her outside and held out her arm during a particular type of drizzle, so that she would be able physically to experience the kind of raindrop that she was

Figure 3.2, extract from Sharma (2003 [2002]), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg miśra Deś*, 12:21 to 12:26.
Tāl = *tīntāl*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A#. See CD 1, track 51.



Sharma's musical setting of "*pīhū pīhū*" enhances its onomatopoeic character. The first time she sings these words, at Z1:3, they are unmarked, forming part of a matter-of-fact statement of a new line of lyrics (see figure 6.1 in the Conclusion). On subsequent settings, however, the words "*pīhū pīhū*" stand out from the music she sings before and afterwards. Figure 3.3 shows all of her subsequent settings of "*pīhū pīhū*". Note that at E2:2 to E2:4 Sharma twice sings them syllabically to the pitches P , with disjunct melodic movement from P to and surrounded by rests beforehand and afterwards so as to create short melodic fragments. This follows a melisma on the syllable "*hā*" and a passage of mainly conjunct movement, which creates the effect of separating the words "*pīhū pīhū*" from the surrounding passages, as if in quotation marks. Their third rendition starts similarly, missing out the initial P but again emphasising a move from to , then concluding in a melisma on the final "*hū*". The words "*pīhū pīhū*" are

already considered onomatopoeic in Hindi: the very sense of the lyrics here is contingent on the fact that the bird-call of the cuckoo is considered to sound like the word for “lover”. By musically separating out the words “*pīhū pīhū*” in her rendition of this *ṭhumrī*, Sharma encourages the listener to hear a musical resemblance between her singing and the sound of a bird-call. Her setting thus involves a musical iconicity that parallels the iconicity of onomatopoeia in language.²² (See Martinez 2001: 115 for other examples of onomatopoeic settings of bird-calls and other sounds in North Indian classical music, though in these cases not in *ṭhumrī*.)

Figure 3.3, extract from Sharma (2003 [2002]), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg miśra Deś*, 10:31 to 11:12.

Tāl = *tīntāl*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A#. See CD 1, track 52.



This passage also involves another, different kind of word-painting. The lyrics of this *ṭhumrī* draw attention to the fact that the hawk-cuckoo repeats his call (“*raṭata hai*”), thus depriving the heroine of sleep. Here, Sharma portrays this repetition with musical repetition. From E2:2 to E2:4, she sets “*pīhū pīhū*” twice, each time to exactly the same pitches (P), literally representing the repetition of the bird’s cry. This is followed by another setting of these lyrics, which resembles the two previous renditions, although it makes use of additional pitches. Sharma’s next setting of “*pīhū*” starts with more musical repetition, this time of the pitches MR,

²² The *papīhā* or hawk-cuckoo (also known as the “brain-fever bird”) is widespread in South Asia. The male has a distinctive, piercing cry. It is not difficult to hear this bird call as saying the words “*pīhū pīhū*” if one chooses to; however, many other syllables would also fit this particular call. Likewise, the melodic shape of Sharma’s sung version of the words “*pīhū pīhū*” bears some resemblance to the bird’s distinctive call, including its falling overall contour and its use of short, repeated melodic fragments. However, it is by no means an accurate transcription of the sound of the bird. At the time of writing, the following websites contain examples of the call of the hawk-cuckoo:

<http://www.junglewalk.com/popup.asp?type=a&AnimalAudioID=6082>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v1ws_PIFSx0

http://www.indiabirds.com/content/FullImagePage.asp?Bird_SortID=171&cid=1&SoundID=49&SoundFileName%20=common_hawk_cuckoo01.wav&SoundFileDuration%20=&LoopStatus%20=True&PauseTime%20=1

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ww-6MABJ0>

which she sings twice. The next six pitches involve a less literal kind of repetition, as the figure MPM is transposed up a tone to become PDP, each time set to the same rhythm. A further instance of musical repetition occurs when Sharma completes the sentence “*pīhū pīhū raṭata hai*” from G2:4 to H2: 1. Here, she sets the words “*pīhū pīhū*” to the pitches N . The next syllable “*ra*” remains on and then the final syllables of the phrase “*-ṭata hai*” repeat the N figure from before. In all of these cases, instances of musical repetition parallel the repetition described by the lyrics: they give the audience an acoustic experience similar to that which the heroine experiences.

Repetition occurs elsewhere in this performance, too. Immediately before the passage transcribed in figure 3.3 and immediately after Sharma first sings the lyrics “*raṭata hai*”, Sharma sings a particularly marked passage of musical repetition: from A2:4 to B2:1, she sings the figure DN N three times to the last syllable of “*papīhā*”. This continues with a slightly modified version of that figure, again starting with D and concluding with a higher note sung twice, separated by a short ornamental note one scale degree higher than that higher note. In this final version, however, that higher note is , producing the figure D . This is shown in figure 3.4. Note the similarity of this phrase to the phrase shown in figure 3.5, from later in the performance. This performance also contains numerous instances of an obsessively repeating musical formula, involving an accelerating oscillation between two adjacent pitches. I have marked instances of this on the transcription in figure 6.1 in the Conclusion to this thesis, where I labelled them with the text “oscillating gesture” in purple boxes.

Figure 3.4, extract from Sharma (2003 [2002]), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg miśra Deś*, 10:18 to 10:27.

Tāl = *tīntāl*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A#. See CD 1, track 53.



Figure 3.5, extract from Sharma (2003 [2002]), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg miśra Deś*, 12:08 to 12:15.

Tāl = *tīntāl*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A#. See CD 1, track 54.



In all of these examples, aspects of the music function as signs for things that occur in the natural world; they help to paint the picture that the lyrics describe. Most of these examples of word-painting are instances of musical iconicity. In some cases, a sense of musical resemblance

between representamen and object occurs as a result of the presence of musical figures which are constructed as “sounding like” the sounds of the physical world being described, like onomatopoeia in language. This occurs, for example, when Sharma isolates the words “*pīhū pīhū*” as if to imitate the sound of a bird’s call, or when singers sing phrases that are intended to evoke the sound of a particular kind of raindrop. In other cases, this iconicity involves what Monelle labels “synaesthesia”, a kind of metaphorical translation of something visual or kinetic into something audible, as in Phillip Tagg’s concept of “anaphone”. Sharma’s suggestion that a florid and ornamented figure could represent flapping wings is an example of this, as is Manuel’s description of “long, sinuous melismas” as representing the idea of women searching for Krishna, or “playing runs” representing “the erratic bouncing of a ball” (1989:138). Sometimes the resemblance involved in these instances of iconicity is even more abstract, as in the case of Sharma’s using musical repetition in a way that parallels the repetition described in the lyrics. Occasionally word-painting does not involve iconicity at all, but rather is wholly symbolic, as in the case described by Manuel of Munnawar Ali Khan’s using a *rāg* suggestive of flute music in order to represent Krishna.

Despite the often seemingly natural relationship between musical signifiers and physical, real-world signifieds in many of these cases of word-painting, all of them involve elements of cultural convention. They all occur within the constraints of a particular musical tradition, involving highly codified rules about *rāg* and *tāl* and other conventions concerning acceptable forms of musical expression. For example, the florid musical figure shown in 3.2, which Sharma associated with the flapping wings of a bird, is also a highly conventional instance of what I labelled the “transposition strategy”, in which a six-note figure occurs at successively lower scale degrees. Its outline traces the typical descending scale of *rāg Deś*, using the pitches NDPMGRS, using *śuddh* in the lower octave so as spell out the figure GRS S, a typical closing figure in *rāg Deś* (see Bor 1999:60 for a fuller description of the *rāg*). Likewise, the pitches setting “*barase*” in figure 3.1 display the characteristic ascent of *rāg Deś*, in which G is omitted.

Examples of musical onomatopoeia, like its linguistic equivalent, rely on social conventions regarding, for example, the sound that birds make. In other examples, musical iconicity occurs as a perceived translation from a visual or kinetic quality of a signified to an audible signifier; here, the appearance of iconicity is often dependent on a recurring, conventional association between physical movement and melismatic word-setting. This is the case for two of the musical characteristics highlighted by Manuel, both for the melismas that he associated with women searching and for those he associated with Krishna’s playfulness. The two instances of word-painting that Sharma highlighted in her own performance both occurred in melismatic passages, which stand out from their more syllabic surroundings. They also both involve the

musical representation of physical movement: in one case, this is heavy rain and in the other, the flapping of a bird's wings. In these different examples, different kinds of melismas are used to represent a variety of different kinds of movement. Thus, in Manuel's description, "sinuous" melismas might depict women searching, while "lively melismas" represent the playfulness of Krishna.

Singers often convey the importance in *ṭhumrī* of musically adhering to the character of the words by telling anecdotes that concern situations in which a particular, perhaps very junior, singer fails to portray in their singing the quality of movement that is described in the lyrics. My teacher tells a story, for example, about an occasion in which a young singer went to sing a *ṭhumrī* to her teacher, Girija Devi. The *ṭhumrī*'s words concerned gentle rocking on a swing, but the young singer apparently sang the *ṭhumrī* in a very jerky manner. Sharma told me that Devi criticised this young singer, remarking that, with singing like that, the heroine of her *ṭhumrī* would have fallen off the swing. This anecdote involves a similar construction of a connection between musical and physical movement. In all of these cases, the connection between musical and physical movement is at least partially the result of cultural convention: one might imagine, perhaps in the context of a different musical tradition, ways in which the use of melisma could take on connotations very different from the kinetic ones it carries here.

As well as making use of common musical conventions of representation, instances of word-painting also tend to occur most often in stereotypical situations. I noted the great frequency of such effects in different depictions of rain and water; it would seem almost impossible to sing a *ṭhumrī* that touches on this subject matter without using some sort of word-painting. Likewise the image of a woman searching for Krishna is very common in *ṭhumrī*; singers often bring up this particular image when they talk about the way in which music might represent the lyrics in *ṭhumrī*.

Just as Monelle highlighted in his discussion of musical iconicity in Western classical music, the musical iconicity of *ṭhumrī* is often highly dependent on conventions of representation. The appearance of iconicity in these cases is not simply a matter of "pure", objective resemblance between representamen and object, but rather is the result of the naturalisation of specific musical signs that occur in stereotypical situations, according to pre-existing musical conventions, in a genre that exists within a particular cultural context. The seeming iconicity of word-painting in *ṭhumrī* thus shares characteristics with the iconicity of some of the musical topics of Western classical music. The use of horn calls, for example, to signify the hunt and therefore the countryside is another example of musical iconicity (since horn calls in music are intended to sound like the horn calls which are imagined as occurring frequently in the countryside, as part of the hunt) that only makes sense in a particular cultural context, as a result of particular conventions of signification. All of these cases complicate the Peircean distinction

between icons and symbols; the apparent iconicity of these musical signs hides their symbolic nature.

In that they consist of particular musical features, which appear in a wide variety of *ṭhumrī* performances, instances of word-painting are examples of the recurring musical formulas I discussed in the previous chapter. Using the terminology I introduced there, they are examples of formulaic musical “strategies”, since they do not necessarily involve the use of any particular pitches, but may be realised differently in different *rāgs* and in different performances. In addition to “successive variation” and other abstract musical strategies discussed in the previous chapter, then, I would suggest that analysts could also look for “word-painting strategies” when examining the musical details of *ṭhumrī* performances. This particular strategy, unlike the ones I discussed previously, involves not only musical characteristics, but also aspects of the lyrics being sung.

Pukār

I noted above that, in addition to representing the physical scene suggested by the lyrics, musicians also draw attention to music’s role in *ṭhumrī* of describing the emotions of the heroine. Sometimes, this involves the use of specific, named musical techniques. *Pukār*, for example, is a musical feature which carries strong emotional connotations for audiences of North Indian classical music and which is particularly associated with *ṭhumrī*. (It also carries gendered associations and is primarily associated with female *ṭhumrī* singers.) Derived from the Hindi verb *pukārna*, meaning “to call”, *pukār* is a high-pitched, high intensity cry which often expresses longing for an absent lover. It is normally associated with phrases sung in the region around . In his dictionary of Hindustani music, Ashok Ranade defines *pukār* as follows:

The term refers to one particular and effective way of intonation in vocal music. It consists of a repeated use of a high note indicating intensity of emotion and one leading to a heightening of musical effect (2006: 235).

In interview, the vocalist Rekha Surya spoke of the importance of *pukār* in *ṭhumrī*. She equates *pukār* with a sense of “passion”, criticising one particular *ghazal* singer for the lack of passion in his performances and attributing this to the absence of *pukār* in his singing, which, she believes, is a consequence of the fact that he had no training in *ṭhumrī*. Other singers speak of a devotional significance to *pukār*. When I spoke with her about *ṭhumrī*, Tulika Ghosh, for example, drew attention to this association, even in un-texted passages, saying, “*Pukār* is a plaintive cry. So when that it there, then even if you sing [with no lyrics], it’s literally calling out to the soul of Krishna.”

Although *pukār* is particularly associated with *ṭhumrī*, some singers and commentators draw attention to its use in *khyāl*, too. Rajshekhar Mansur stated that *pukār* is one of the distinctive characteristics of his *khyāl* style, saying that “very few musicians understand this concept of

pukār”. Tulika Ghosh, too, spoke of her use of *pukār* in *khyāl*, describing differences in way she uses *pukār* in *thumrī* and *khyāl* respectively. In his book *The Musical Heritage of India*, M. R. Gautam writes that *pukār* is one of the “aesthetic aspects” of *thumrī* which certain *khyāl gharānās* have “absorbed” (2001: 75). In contrast, other commentators believe that *pukār* should only occur in *thumrī* and not in *khyāl*. In his liner notes to an album of *thumrī* performed by Girija Devi, Deepak Raja writes that *pukār* is one of a number of “modes of melodic execution” that “are so intimately associated with thumri, that their use in khayal is considered inappropriate” (2004:12).

As well as being associated with *thumrī* over other genres, *pukār* is associated with certain singers more than others. It is often linked with the Banaras style of *thumrī*. Many music-lovers celebrate the *pukār* they hear in performances by Siddheshwari Devi, for example. In a short description of Siddheshwari Devi in his book *Indian Classical Music: Essence and Emotions*, Sunil Bose writes, “Her ‘pukars’ – which is the soul of *Thumri* singing – not only elevated her but also carried her audience to enjoy the bliss of music” (1990: 108). In an interview in *The Hindu* with Gautam Chatterjee, the singer Girija Devi stated that “to date [Siddheshwari Devi] remains unsurpassed as far as pukaar is concerned” (12th May 2006). Savita Devi, Siddheshwari Devi’s daughter, draws a link between her mother’s celebrated *pukār* and her religious devotion: she writes in her biography of her mother that the “*pukar* – calling out to God – which one could hear in her songs left one astounded” (2000: 110). She continues that this *pukār* “was like the cry of an anguished devotee’s heart” (111).

Listening to her performance of “*He mā, kārī badariyā barase*”, Sharma pointed out two instances of *pukār*. Figure 3.6 shows an extract that comes from about five minutes into the performance. Here, Sharma sings the words, “*piyā nahī āe*”, meaning “my lover has not come”. After hearing this, Sharma told me that it demonstrated her use of *pukār*. After the introductory *ālāp*, this is the first time Sharma’s melodic line moves into the register around . Sharma had once briefly touched on in an ornament at B: 3, but, for the previous couple of minutes (since the start of the metered section), the majority of Sharma’s phrases had remained in the lower half of her middle octave. Note the wailing quality of Sharma’s voice as she sings this phrase, which, as well as being higher than the previous phrases, is also louder. Sharma pointed out another instance of *pukār* later on in the performance (see figure 3.7). Though she did not explicitly comment on them, there are other passages containing *pukār* throughout the performance, which is a highly expressive and moving account of the pain and longing experienced by its lonely protagonist.

Figure 3.6, extract from Sharma (2003 [2002]), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg miśra Deś*, 04:58 to 05:13.

Tāl = *tīntāl*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A#. See CD 1, track 55.

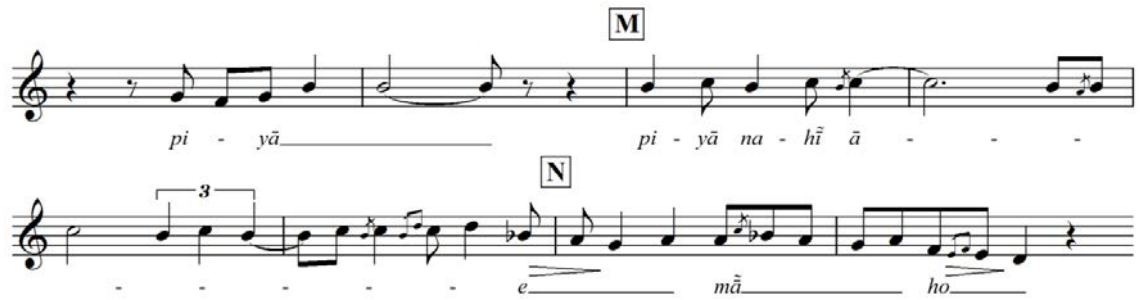


Figure 3.7, extract from Sharma (2003 [2002]), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg miśra Deś*, 11:46 to 11:54.

Tāl = *tīntāl*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A#. See CD 1, track 56.



Like the examples of word-painting discussed above, Sharma's use of *pukār* is an example of the way in which music can function as a sign. In this case, musicians and connoisseurs widely recognise certain melodic features (an expressive cry in the upper register, particularly around or above) as instances of a specific musical technique, which carries particular emotional connotations. Also, like word-painting, it is a type of recurring musical formula: in this case, it is an example of what I labelled a musical “gesture”, since it involves a particular contour, always rising to the upper part of a singer's register.

How to sound sad in rāg Deś

In our discussion of her “*He mā, kārī badariyā barase*”, Sharma also spoke about the emotional connotations of musical features for which there exists no specific insider terminology. After listening for about 45 seconds, Sharma asked me to pause the recording. She drew attention to the way in which her singing had already started to give an impression of the emotions of the *ṭhumrī*, even before she had introduced the lyrics of the composition. In particular, she spoke about the sense of sadness that she feels characterises this *ṭhumrī* and how it is manifest in her singing. She demonstrated ways in which her singing of the same *rāg* would be different if the composition had been a happy one. First, she sang a melodic figure very similar to the one she had just listened to in the recording (see figure 3.8). It consists of a pause on M, followed by the notes G and R. This figure gets quieter at the end, giving an impression of tapering off. Note the sense of pleading evoked by pause on M and subsequent diminuendo through G and R.

Figure 3.8, extract from Sharma (2003 [2002]), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg miśra Deś*, 00:25 to 00:35.

Tāl = *tīntāl*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A#. See CD 1, track 57.

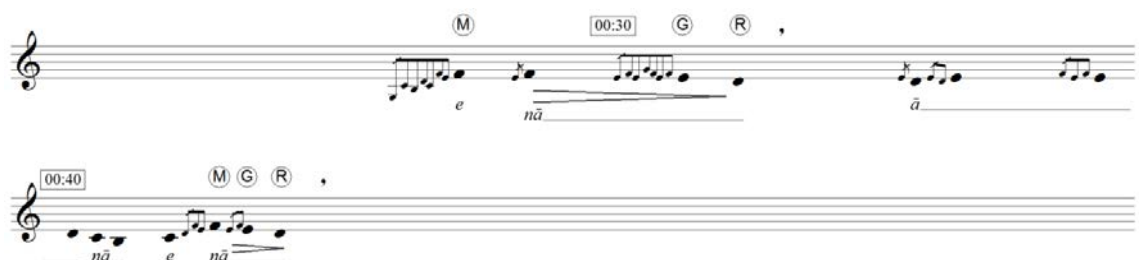


After repeating this phrase to me, Sharma then sang a series of phrases in the same *rāg* in a way which she described as “happy” and representative of how she would open a *ṭhumrī* whose words were, “Oh my mother, he [my lover] has come!” The particular way of singing MGR shown in figure 3.8, characterised by a pause on M and then by a decrease in volume at the end of the phrase, was absent from this second, happy musical demonstration. Instead, Sharma sang a series of much faster, livelier phrases. She sometimes quickly traced the figure MGR, but she avoided the expressive, pleading way of rendering the phrase that she had sung when demonstrating how to sound sad.

Note also the way Sharma uses this expressive version of the MGR figure at the start of this performance. Figure 3.8 shows its first occurrence. After this, Sharma sings a phrase that contains the notes GRS S. This is a typical closing figure in this *rāg*. The phrase could have ended here, on the tonic, or S. However, instead, Sharma suddenly and unexpectedly sings another version of the pleading MGR figure, as if interrupting herself. In the end this phrase does not rest on the tonic, S, but breaks off without resolution, ending with the second scale degree, R. This lends the phrase an unsettled feel, appropriate to the unsettled emotional state of the heroine. (See figure 3.9 for the continuation of this phrase, where I have marked instances of the MGR figure with circled letters above the staff.)

Figure 3.9, extract from Sharma (2003 [2002]), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg miśra Deś*, 00:25 to 00:46.

Tāl = *tīntāl*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A#. See CD 1, track 58.

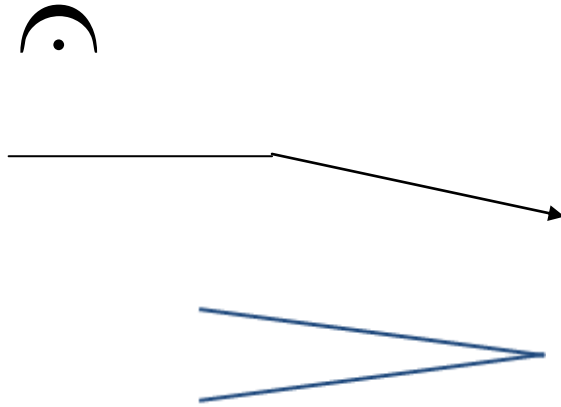


Sharma's choice of melodic features is closely tied to the emotions she wishes to bring out in the lyrics she is singing. Noting the conventional nature of her musical representation of emotion, she commented that she believes that any knowledgeable listener ought, also, to be able to recognise these emotional connotations in the music she is singing, even in the wordless *ālāp* section that occurs before she has introduced the lyrics of the composition. While listening to this section, she said, "from here, you can see the flavour of the composition." She continued, "... and the good audience, he can make out with *ālāps* that some sad and mystic thing is coming after this". This indicates the communal way in which musical signs can function. While musical features conjure up unique associations for each individual listener, perhaps evoking very personal memories, communities of listeners, familiar with a musical style and existing in a common cultural environment, will likely have learned and built up some shared associations in response to recurring musical features such as the ones that Sharma mentions here.

"Sigh figures"

Differentiating her "sad" version of *rāg Deś* from its "happy" theoretical alternative, Sharma sang the figure MGR in a particular manner, such that it occurred at the end of a phrase or phrase-unit and tapered off in volume. I would like to suggest that this figure is part of a broader family of musical formulas which I label "sigh figures", borrowing terminology normally used to describe a similar kind of musical gesture that occurs in Western classical music. In *thumrī*, what I call "sigh figures" are short figures which involve a stepwise descent in pitch and a reduction in volume. They often occur at the ends of phrases or phrase-units. The first note of the figure is often held for longer than subsequent notes. They are examples of a musical "gesture", as discussed in the last chapter, since they involve a recurring overall melodic contour, realised through different pitches and scale degrees on each occurrence. Figure 3.10 is a graphical representation of this formula.

Figure 3.10, “sigh figure” schema.



Sigh figures often occur in passages which demonstrate *pukār*. They even form part of the definition of *pukār* according to Peter Manuel, who adds other to definitions of *pukār* such that it should not only include a “surging ascent to” and “dynamic swell on [a] melodic peak”, but also a “subsequent fall” from it (1989: 122). Sigh figures appear, for example, in both of the places in Sharma’s *“He mā, kārī badariyā barase”* that she identified as instances of *pukār*. When Tulika Ghosh demonstrated *pukār* to me in interview, she also sang phrases that involved abundant use of sigh figures. However, they do not only occur in conjunction with *pukār*, also appearing in places that use too low a register to be labelled instances of *pukār*.

Sigh figures are highly emotionally expressive and are often used, like *pukār*, in passages in which the lyrics emphasise longing for the beloved or despair at his absence. They often set the words “*ho*”, “*o*” or “*he*”, equivalent to the English “oh!” and “ah!”. Perron notes their role as “filler-words”: singers often add them at appropriate moments in performance, even if they do not appear in the lyrics of the composition (2007: 5). She points out that, unlike in other genres, filler-words in *ṭhumrī* are often “charged with emotional expression” (86) and may be used not only for metrical purposes but also in order to produce “heightened emotional expression” (114). Sigh figures frequently occur in the music of Siddheshwari Devi and Rasoolan Bai and Badi Moti Bai, singers celebrated for the “emotion” of their *ṭhumrī* renditions. Figures 3.11, 3.12 and 3.13 show examples of sigh figures from Rasoolan Bai’s performance of the *ṭhumrī* “*Rasa ke bhare tore naina*”. They are marked with hairpins on the transcriptions below. (These passages are typical of Rasoolan Bai’s style of singing. She often makes expressive use of dynamic contrast; here, this has the effect of bringing out the sense of longing in the lyrics, which are written from the perspective of a woman who is pleading with her lover to come to her.)

Figure 3.11, extract from Rasoolan Bai (2007), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Bhairavī*, 0:24 to 0:51.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ G. See CD 1, track 59.



Figure 3.12, extract from Rasoolan Bai (2007), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Bhairavī*, 02:15 to 02:43.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ G. See CD 1, track 60.



Figure 3.13, extract from Rasoolan Bai (2007), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Bhairavī*, 07:07 to 07:17.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ G. See CD 1, track 61.



When I interviewed the singer Moumita Mitra, she spoke about an occasion on which her teacher had scolded her for not being expressive enough in her singing and how she had subsequently endeavoured to sing one particular *ṭhumrī* in a more expressive manner. I asked her about how, precisely, she might make her singing more expressive. She then demonstrated the difference between singing that is expressive and singing that is not: one of the crucial differences between these two demonstrations was that many sigh figures appeared in her demonstration of expressive singing.

In North Indian classical music, sigh figures are conventional signs of sadness and longing. They occur frequently in *ṭhumrī* and help to lend the genre its especially emotional ethos. Despite the lack of insider terminology for them (such as there is for *pukār*), I would argue that

they are nevertheless just as worthy of analysis when considering the semiotics of *ṭhumrī* performances. (I will discuss the significance of musicians' insistence on the emotional character of *ṭhumrī* further in the next chapter, where I consider its wider social significance in the context of debates about the value of *ṭhumrī* relative to other North Indian classical genres.)

When sigh figures are heard as signs of emotion, they involve a variety of the different types of semiosis which Peirce discusses. If they are interpreted as occurring as a result of the singer's internal, emotional disposition (for example by a listener who hears the performance as emotionally authentic), then they function as indices, that is as sign vehicles which are causally related to their objects. They are symbols insofar as they depend on conventions of representation, including, for example, the *rāg* in which they are expressed. If they are heard as sounding like sighs or perhaps like cries of anguish, then they function as icons, since they depend on an acoustic resemblance between sign vehicle and its object. In this case, interpreting the sign might involve multiple levels of semiosis: at the first level, a sigh figure might resemble (iconically) a cry of pain, which, at the second level, might be heard (indexically) as occurring as a result of the singer's internal emotional state.

Other musical characteristics with emotional connotations

In my discussions with musicians, some also spoke about the emotional connotations of other musical characteristics. When I interviewed the singer Tulika Ghosh, she discussed the significance of the ways musical phrases end. She noted one way in which the musical setting of particular lyrics in a *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Desh* has an emotional effect that is appropriate to those lyrics. She drew my attention to the setting of the lyrics, “*sab ghar āe, piyā nahī āe*”, meaning “everyone has come home, but my lover has not come home”. In this particular *ṭhumrī*, these lyrics are set by two successive musical phrases. The first (setting the lyrics “*sab ghar āe*”) ends on *Sa* and then the second (setting “*piyā nahī āe*”) ends on *Re*. Describing the sense of closure afforded by the end of the first phrase, Ghosh said, “*Sa* is the pinnacle, so it's an equilibrium. ‘*Sab ghar āe*’ [‘everybody has come home’], so that's where everybody is finding that equilibrium.” Describing the end of the second phrase, however, she said, “See ... the plaintive cry which is there in *Re*... ‘*Piyā nahī āe*.’ It's ... making you feel disoriented, making you feel imbalanced. So the *Re* has such a force in that, compared to *Sa*.” I have already discussed this difference in significance between ending on *S* and ending on *R* in relation to the extract in figure 3.9. I proposed that when Sharma interrupts what would have been a conventional closing figure in the *rāg*, concluding on *S*, to sing a figure which ends on *R*, it lends the phrase an unsettled feel. In the last chapter, too, I considered ways in which musical phrases end, noting, for example, instances in which musicians deny or delay an expected resolution onto *S*. There, I analysed this from the perspective of its effect on the listener, suggesting that phrase endings are one place at which musicians manipulate the expectations of their audiences in

order to generate musical interest. These comments by Ghosh suggest an additional significance to phrase endings: she highlights how they might also represent emotions inherent in the lyrics.

In the same interview, Ghosh also spoke of the particular connotations of singing in different parts of her register. After demonstrating a couple of phrases around ṭhūmrī and pukār , she said they demonstrated an emotion “which is not there in the *mandra saptak* [the lower octave, from ṭhūmrī to S]”. For her, the lower octave is “meditative”, but “as you go up, you start reaching up, the skies call out”. This is why, she feels, *pukār* is in the upper octave (above ṭhūmrī) “ninety percent of the time”.

A number of musicians with whom I spoke emphasised the importance of the particular *rāg* of the composition in lending *ṭhūmrī* its emotional connotations. Moumita Mitra, for example, said, “*Bhairavī* is a painful *rāg*: the note combinations give you such depressing feelings sometimes.” K. Upendra Bhat, meanwhile, spoke of character of *Jogiyā*, saying that it involves a “sad mood” and “*viraha*” (separation from the beloved).

Other signs in ṭhūmrī performances

In examining the semiotic potential of *ṭhūmrī*, this chapter has focussed on instances of musical signification which concern the relationship between *ṭhūmrī*’s music and its lyrics. This focus is a response to musicians’ emphasis on the text as the primary source of meaning in *ṭhūmrī*. However, there are many other kinds of meanings that *ṭhūmrī*’s musical material might evoke for singers and listeners. Certain musical features of *ṭhūmrī* might serve the role of generic indicators, distinguishing the genre from *khyāl* or *dhrupad*. The use of the *murkī* (an ornament associated with *ṭhūmrī*) is one example of this. Particular phrases might serve as signs of the *rāg* being performed. Other features might be characteristic of particular vocal styles, perhaps evoking the style of a famous *ṭhūmrī* singer of the past or of the singer’s teacher. Other features might be sung as a display of virtuosity: singers might use them as a way of demonstrating to the audience their expertise and years of training. Yet other features might serve as structural landmarks: the onset of the *laggī*, for example, indicates to the audience that the performance will soon be coming to a close. Turino has drawn attention to the “multi-componential” aspect of most music. In *ṭhūmrī*, in particular, there are many different potentially meaningful musical components to a performance, only some of which I have discussed here. In this chapter, for example, I focussed on the solo melodic line, completely ignoring the musical contributions of the other players on stage, which might well turn out to be meaningful in complementary or contradictory ways to the music of the soloist. In addition, musicians’ stage behaviour and dress was completely absent from my consideration of musical signs in this chapter, though they would seem important contributors to the meaningfulness of *ṭhūmrī*. I also did not look at musicians’ hand gestures during performance: this, in particular, would seem to benefit from

further investigation along the lines of Leante's study of *Śrī rāg* in *khyāl*. I continue to explore some of the complexity of the different meanings that *ṭhumrī*'s music evokes in the next chapter, where I consider the wider social significance of different aspects of *ṭhumrī* style.

Conclusion: semiosis, expert musicians and expert listeners

In this chapter I have considered the relationship between music and meaning in *ṭhumrī*, analysing it by employing concepts and terminology from the field of semiotics. I examined ways in which musicians and listeners construct *ṭhumrī* as meaningful when they talk about the genre and discussed a variety of different types of musical signs in *ṭhumrī* performances. My discussions with musicians reveal that *ṭhumrī* is a rich and sophisticated field of musical semiosis. Musicians take great pride in their ability to signify “extra-musical” (whether physical or emotional) objects through musical sign vehicles. For expert listeners and music connoisseurs, learning how to appreciate *ṭhumrī* involves cultivating a keen sensibility to particular kinds of musical signification, above all to those instances in which *ṭhumrī*'s musical content is related to its lyrics. *Ṭhumrī*, then, affords a particular kind of connoisseurship, which listeners can display when they show their appreciation of musical signs in performance.

In the next chapter, I will examine the wider context within which discourses about *ṭhumrī* (and its signification) exist. I will re-visit ideas about *ṭhumrī*'s especially emotional nature, considering the social reasons why they appear so frequently in discussions of the genre. I will also consider the role that the culture of connoisseurship surrounding *ṭhumrī* plays in influencing musical aspects of the genre. Amongst other things, I will argue that connoisseurship in North Indian classical music produces some of a variety of sometimes conflicting social pressures acting on musicians, which influence both the (verbal) statements musicians make about *ṭhumrī* and also their stylistic decisions in performance.

CHAPTER FOUR

Social strategies and the common wisdom about *ṭhumrī* style

Introduction: social semiotics and the analysis of music as discourse

In the last chapter, I considered ways in which musical features can evoke shared “extra-musical” associations for performers and listeners with shared musical and cultural experiences. I argued that when this happens musical features are functioning as signs and suggested using theories and terminology from semiotics to make sense of this phenomenon. In this chapter, I will look more broadly at the relationship between musical signs and the social context in which they exist. This change in emphasis, from an examination of particular cases of semiosis to a more broad study of socially situated processes of signification, mirrors a development within semiotics itself, specifically the emergence of so-called “social semiotics” over the last three decades.

In their seminal introductory work, *Social Semiotics*, Robert Hodge and Gunther Kress stress the importance of analysing signs as part of their broader social environment. They describe their book as the result of a development in thought since their earlier semiotic work, emerging out of the fact that they “now see social structures and processes, messages and meanings as the proper standpoint from which to attempt the analysis of meaning systems”. They write of the differences between what they call “mainstream semiotics” and the more socially grounded approach they advocate: they critique mainstream semiotics for emphasising “structures and codes” while it neglects “the functions and social uses of semiotic systems” and “the complex interrelations of semiotic systems in social practice” (1988: vii). Elsewhere, Kress argues that “*the social is in the sign*”. Explaining this statement, he writes, “[It] is not a question of a correlation between an autonomously existing sign, and an external social reality, of a context around a sign, or around the text as complex sign”. Rather, he argues, “The sign is fully social, the work of social/semiotic agents expressing their sense of the social world at a particular moment, and of their affective response in it” (Kress 2001: 75-6). A similar analytical agenda is revealed in the “aims and scope” of the journal *Social Semiotics*, dedicated to this new field. There, the concerns of social semiotics are formulated as a question: “[Social semiotics] asks ‘what kinds of semiotic resources are used in specific institutional or social contexts and how do these reflect and conceal specific interests, power relations and communicative strategies?’”

The interests of social semioticians overlap considerably with those of scholars working in sociolinguistics, particularly those who practice what they call “discourse analysis” or “critical

discourse analysis” (CDA). Norman Fairclough has been a pioneer in this field. He theorises CDA as “an analytical framework – a theory and method – for studying language in relation to power and ideology” (1995:1). He describes this framework as “three-dimensional”, involving three forms of analysis: “analysis of (spoken or written) language texts, analysis of discourse practice (processes of text production, distribution and consumption) and analysis of discursive events as instances of sociocultural practice” (1995:2). Arguing “that analysis of texts should not be artificially isolated from analysis of the institutional and discursive practices within which texts are embedded” (1995:9), he writes, “My view is that ‘discourse’ is use of language seen as a form of social practice, and discourse analysis is analysis of how texts work within sociocultural practice” (1995:7). Elsewhere, Bloor and Bloor characterise the discipline in similar terms: “Critical discourse analysts ... are interested in the way in which language and discourse are used to achieve social goals and in the part this use plays in social maintenance and change” (2007:2).

Social semiotics, however, unlike most CDA, is not concerned merely with the analysis of language. Hodge and Kress stress that social semiotics necessarily involves the consideration of what they call the “multimodality” of processes of semiosis. In *Social Semiotics*, they are critical of many semioticians’ tendency to focus exclusively on language. They write, “Meaning resides so strongly and pervasively in other systems of meaning, in a multiplicity of visual, aural, behavioural and other codes, that a concentration on words alone is not enough.” Rather, they say, they believe that “no single code can be successfully studied or fully understood in isolation” (1988: vii). Theo van Leeuwen makes a similar point in his book, *Introducing Social Semiotics*: in a definition of social semiotics, he writes, “Rather than contrasting separate accounts of the various semiotic modes – the ‘semiotics of the image’, the ‘semiotics of music’, and so on – social semiotics compares and contrasts semiotic modes, exploring what they have in common as well as how they differ, and investigating how they can be integrated in multimodal artefacts and events” (2005: xi). Elsewhere, he theorises the multimodality even of discourse, writing, “Discourses, as I conceive of them ..., can be realized, not only linguistically, but also by means of other semiotic modes” (2008: viii).

In this chapter, I take an approach to the analysis of *ṭhumrī* style that is inspired by social semiotics and CDA. Specifically I am interested here in ways in which music itself might act, alongside language, as part of particular, socially situated discourses.²³ This allows me to consider in further depth aspects of the relationship between music and meaning in *ṭhumrī*, a theme which I started to explore in the last chapter; here I focus on the links between musical signs and the discursive strategies musicians adopt in response to various social pressures.

²³ This analytical aim is dependent on van Leeuwen’s insight that discourse itself is not merely linguistic but rather is multimodal in nature.

Taking into account the multimodality of meaning-making in relation to music, I analyse musical performances alongside linguistic and other information, paying attention in particular to the relationship between *ṭhumrī*'s musical content and the words which are spoken and written about the genre.

In the next sections of this chapter, I will examine some of the themes that recur in the discursive world surrounding *ṭhumrī*. I will consider ways in which they emerge from and are related to particular social and historical circumstances. I will argue that they form part of ongoing debates about the nature and status of *ṭhumrī* and are the result of different, competing musical ideologies. I will argue, further, that musicians use elements of these different discourses strategically, in order to enhance their own prestige or respectability, or to improve their commercial success, in an environment in which *ṭhumrī* singers often have a lesser status than the singers of the classical genres *khyāl* and *dhrupad*.

Ethnomusicologists often place great emphasis on incorporating into their research “insider” perspectives on the music they are studying. This idea, for example, informed much of the so-called “emic-etic” debate of the 1990s and is also manifested in discussions of the value of “ethnotherapy” within Western scholarly contexts (see for example Rice (1994) and a special issue of *The World of Music* (1993, 35.1) dedicated to the emic/etic debate in ethnomusicology). These discussions often imply that the “insider’s” perspective is unitary and coherent, capable of being uncovered by the scholar who adopts a culturally sensitive approach and does the right kind of fieldwork. In this case, contrary to that impression, I argue that there exist a number of different, competing “insider” understandings of *ṭhumrī*, produced in an environment in which insiders themselves disagree about the nature and status of the genre.

The common wisdom about *ṭhumrī*

During my fieldwork interviews, I asked my informants about *ṭhumrī* style. I asked them about what they considered to be the most important characteristics of the genre and how it differed from other North Indian classical genres, about the training process involved in learning *ṭhumrī* and about what it feels like to perform it on stage, amongst other things. My questions often provoked very similar answers. These answers reflected descriptions of the genre in a variety of other sources, including books about music, CD liner notes and concert reviews. They would appear to be different manifestations of a common, underlying schema: they tend to share certain key ingredients, while they vary in some of their more precise details.

Almost all descriptions of *ṭhumrī* begin by situating the genre within North Indian classical music as a “semi-classical” or “light classical” genre, which is normally attributed to the fact

that singing *ṭhumrī* does not require the same strictness when it comes to *rāg* as singing the purely classical *khyāl* or *dhrupad*. Other recurrent themes in descriptions of *ṭhumrī* include the following:

- that the appropriate musical rendering of the lyrics is very important in *ṭhumrī*, particularly with respect to ensuring their intelligibility and bringing out their emotional content;
- that *ṭhumrī* is an especially emotional genre;
- that *ṭhumrī* is representative of *śrī gāra rasa*;
- that *ṭhumrī*'s amorous lyrics are an analogy for religious devotion;
- that *ṭhumrī* is characterised by distinctive ornamentation;
- that *ṭhumrī* used to be sung and danced by courtesans and emerged in the court of Wajid Ali Shah in nineteenth-century Lucknow;
- that there are two major stylistic schools of *ṭhumrī*, known as the *pūrab ā g* and *Pa jāb ā g*;
- that the Banaras style of *ṭhumrī* (a subset of the *pūrab ā g*) is the primary, “pure” style;
- and that *ṭhumrī* is part of a larger set of semi-classical genres (including *dādrā* and *caitī*), all of which are related musically.

In this chapter, I take this standard description of *ṭhumrī* as a starting point for an analysis of the relationship between *ṭhumrī*'s musical characteristics and its social context. I will argue that it is not ideologically neutral, but rather emerged as the result of *ṭhumrī*'s contested status in the twentieth century, itself a result of a particular set of social and historical circumstances. I will identify five different musical-linguistic complexes surrounding *ṭhumrī*, considering in each case how musical features and language might operate together as part of multimodal discourses. I will also suggest ways in which *ṭhumrī* singers deploy aspects of these discourses strategically, in order to re-negotiate the status of *ṭhumrī* so as to improve their own social status, focussing in particular on the vocalist Girija Devi.

Background: *ṭhumrī* and *ṭhumrī* singers

In the introduction to this thesis, I considered the historical background of *ṭhumrī*, noting its problematic status within North Indian classical music. I discussed the disappearance of the courtesan tradition and *ṭhumrī*'s past performance contexts, which came to be considered highly disreputable. I noted *ṭhumrī*'s transition into the modern concert hall, alongside *khyāl* and *dhrupad*. I also highlighted Peter Manuel's description of the musical (and other) changes that

accompanied this transition, which, he points out, constitute a form of “classicization”, aimed at improving the prestige of the genre and minimising its association with courtesans.

In spite of these developments, *ṭhumrī* never achieved the status or the respectability of *khyāl* and *dhrupad*. Nowadays, most people describe *ṭhumrī* as merely “semi-classical” (as opposed to the fully classical *khyāl* and *dhrupad*). In doing so, they group *ṭhumrī* with a number of other semi-classical genres, including *dādrā* and *caitī*; of these, *ṭhumrī* is normally considered the most classical. In the imagination of the majority of musicians and listeners, *ṭhumrī* now exists somewhere in between the classical and light genres of Indian music and has retained an association with the courtesan tradition.²⁴ Nevertheless, despite the relative consensus around *ṭhumrī*’s “semi-classical” label, the status of the genre within North Indian classical music has continued to be contested, with different people putting forward a variety of opinions about its classicality, its difficulty, its musical character and its value relative to *khyāl* and *dhrupad*.

Since the middle of the twentieth century, *ṭhumrī* has existed primarily in the concert hall and other formal, public performance environments. Sometimes, it is performed by semi-classical specialists, in concerts solely consisting of *ṭhumrī* and other semi-classical genres. At other times, it is performed by classical musicians, often taking on what Peter Manuel describes as a “dessert” role (1989:92), presented as a “short sentimental finale” to a classical performance (1989: 94). *Ṭhumrī* recordings, dating from the first decade of the twentieth century until the present day, also live in the private collections of music-lovers and music connoisseurs, who take great pleasure in listening to relics from *ṭhumrī*’s past, as well as the better-quality recordings of modern-day singers.

Performers of *ṭhumrī*, both semi-classical specialists and classical singers, must negotiate an employment market in which opportunities to perform are hard to come by, and in which performers’ access to such opportunities is mediated by a handful of senior musicians, concert organisers and connoisseurs, whose opinions about the relative status of different genres have a direct impact on which singers succeed and which do not. A number of singers with whom I spoke lamented the fact that only a few well-known singers tend to receive the majority of invitations to perform, while the rest are relatively neglected and must turn to teaching or find other sources of employment in order to get by. Some spoke of the unfortunate necessity of being able to say one has toured internationally before one may achieve any kind of recognition and respect as a performer within India. Others spoke about the difficulty of gaining favour with a relatively small number of concert organisers, normally music connoisseurs, who have the power to select musicians for performances.

²⁴ Regula Qureshi (2001: 98-99) and Vidya Rao (1990: WS-31) both read the setting up of this hierarchy of genres as a patriarchal project, in which women’s genres are effectively marginalised under the heading “semi-“ or “light classical”, while men’s genres are taken as a core repertoire and are most associated with master musicians.

Female *ṭhumrī* singers face particular challenges, as a result of *ṭhumrī*'s continued association with the courtesan tradition. Various scholars have discussed how female performers have attempted to re-negotiate a position for themselves in a context in which their respectability has frequently been thrown into question. Amelia Maciszewski has highlighted various strategies which female musicians took in furthering their careers and their own personal respectability. Mostly this involved attempts to distance themselves from suggestions that they might hail from a courtesan background. Some former courtesans whom Maciszewski interviewed had got married, leaving behind the courtesan lifestyle; some lived pious lives, emphasising their spirituality; some had changed their names; and, in one case, a musician had moved to an area where her background was not known (2001a and 2001b). Many tried to suppress their backgrounds when narrating their life stories. They denied or played down the fact that they had learned to sing from their mothers, since matrilineal transmission of musical repertoire is a hallmark of the courtesan community. Instead, they claimed to have learnt "by listening" (see for example 2001b: 6).

Some courtesans took lessons from male teachers, where they joined middle-class, amateur (and respectable) female co-pupils. Neuman writes that "if a tawaif [courtesan] has learned from a reputable ustad [teacher]..., then she can establish her identity as being primarily a vocalist by profession", but that "if she cannot claim to be a disciple, then her identity will be that of an entertainer, that is, a singer and/or dancer, which is subordinate to her primary identity as a courtesan, if not a common prostitute" (1980: 101). Amlan Das Gupta points out that even in the nineteenth century a large number of professional female musicians took training from male hereditary musicians; however, he notes that it was only in the early decades of the twentieth century that they began to demand to be recognised as "gharana artists", with the same *gharānā* affiliation as their teachers (2005: 472-475). The classical training (and *gharānā* affiliation) provided by these male teachers gave women the opportunity to market their expertise in genres more normally associated with male hereditary musicians (*khyāl* in particular). In order to affirm their status as classical musicians, some female singers (such as Kesarbai Kerkar: see Neuman 1980: 207 and Post 1992: 104) chose to focus entirely on those genres, consciously avoiding those genres which had a courtesan background.

Within this social and discursive context, the status of *ṭhumrī* in North Indian classical music is significant not merely as an academic issue concerning musical differences between different genres, but is a factor that can influence whether or not *ṭhumrī* singers are able to make a living, in an environment in which they must compete for scarce performing opportunities, both against each other and against singers who specialise in other genres and who may choose not to sing *ṭhumrī* at all. Each individual singer's description of *ṭhumrī* constitutes one possible path among the various arguments for and against the genre, with the potential to have a real impact on their

own personal status and on their ability to access performing opportunities. In attempting to raise their own prestige or respectability (and resultant employability), musicians adopt a variety of different strategies when they talk about *ṭhumrī*. Some singers argue in favour of *ṭhumrī*, attempting to raise their own status by claiming a high status for the music they perform. They might do this by referring to an imagined past in which *ṭhumrī* enjoyed high-status patronage, or perhaps by emphasising the difficulty of the genre, or its unique beauty. Others musicians distance themselves from *ṭhumrī* altogether, preferring to be associated only with the unambiguously high-status *khyāl*, some thereby unwittingly joining the ranks of *ṭhumrī*'s detractors. The opinions of connoisseurs and music-lovers, too, are contingent on social issues. The desire to display one's connoisseurship and expertise to others is often manifested in strong opinions about *ṭhumrī*, sometimes for and sometimes against.

Debates about the status of *ṭhumrī* include discussion of *ṭhumrī*'s musical characteristics and inform singers' musical decisions. The next section will look at the interaction between rhetorical and musical strategies in musicians' attempts raise the prestige of *ṭhumrī*. There is no one grand narrative that can easily explain the musical development of *ṭhumrī* in the second half of the twentieth century; rather, different singers take a plethora of different stylistic approaches to *ṭhumrī*. I would like to suggest that this stylistic multiplicity is partially a consequence of the fraught discursive context in which *ṭhumrī* is embedded.²⁵

Discourses about *ṭhumrī* and their social significance

In this section, I will examine a number of themes in the way in which musicians describe *ṭhumrī* and consider the social significance of taking different stances on *ṭhumrī* style. I will look at the musical features that underline musicians' rhetorical strategies and consider how musicians' positions on *ṭhumrī* inform their musical choices. I will focus on five, sometimes overlapping and sometimes mutually contradictory discursive themes, which I have labelled the "classicality discourse", the "*gharānā* discourse", the "devotional discourse", the "Golden Age discourse" and the "emotional discourse".

Classicality discourse

In the introduction to this thesis, I drew attention to Peter Manuel's description of the classicisation of *ṭhumrī* in the early decades of the twentieth century. He drew a link between musicians' decisions (and resultant musical developments in *ṭhumrī*) and a social strategy

²⁵ Other factors also contribute to this plurality, including the potential for multiple stylistic influences afforded by the wide dissemination of recorded performances of *ṭhumrī*. Peter Manuel points out that "mass accessibility to music via the radio, records, and public concerts has enabled musicians to imitate other artists at will" (1989:92).

designed by musicians to improve their own prestige and respectability, and that of *ṭhumrī*. He suggested that a process of musical classicisation was a crucial factor in facilitating the genre's survival at a time of enormous social change. According to his description, this involved the invention of the *bol banāo ṭhumrī* and culminated in the heyday of the genre, in the period 1920-1960, which he labels the "The *Bol Banāo Ṭhumrī in its Prime*" (1989: 82). He does not discuss subsequent musical developments in detail, but notes that it developed in the seventies and eighties "in directions which are considered by some to constitute a decline in the state of the art" (91). He suggests various reasons for this, including a lack of singers "of stature comparable to the previous generation" (91), the increasing demand for vocal acrobatics from audiences (93-4) and "the relegation of *ṭhumrī*'s status to that of a short, light "dessert" concluding a recital [of *khayāl*]" (93), itself a result of both the "evident demand of the current, more sophisticated bourgeois audiences for the serious, abstract development of *khayāl*" (95) and of the fact that "*khayāl* and *ṭhumrī* have influenced each other so strongly that *ṭhumrī* has lost some of its uniqueness" (95).

The main focus of this study is on *ṭhumrī* after the period that Manuel describes. I focus on the second half of the twentieth century onwards, including the 30 years that have passed since Manuel completed his research. Following Manuel, I am interested in ways in which musicians' decisions have continued to be linked to social factors in this later period of *ṭhumrī*'s development. However I will resist telling one overall narrative of the history and musical development of *ṭhumrī*. Rather I would like to suggest that the more recent development of the genre is characterised by stylistic diversity. In the second half of the twentieth century, musicians have made a variety of different arguments about *ṭhumrī*'s classicality and, accordingly, have adopted a plurality of musical approaches to the genre. Some musicians appear to have continued to classicise the genre, both musically and rhetorically; other musicians have not. In the case of yet other musicians, certain elements of their style constitute a sort of "classicisation", while other elements do not. All of these approaches can be situated within a broader discourse on classicality in North Indian classical music; I would like to suggest that, within this discourse, the relative consensus around the "semi-classical" label for *ṭhumrī* in fact disguises a range of different opinions concerning the genre's position in the hierarchy of Indian music, each with different consequences in terms of *ṭhumrī*'s musical features.

Ṭhumrī is not the only genre whose classicality was the subject of discussion in the early twentieth century. Rather, the classicising project embraced all of North (and also South) Indian classical music, in what Katherine Schofield has described as "a new discursive wave of veneration, canonization, standardization and systematization". Schofield, Matthew Harp Allen (1998), Pamela Moro (2004), Janaki Bakhle (2005) and Amanda Weidman (2003, 2006) are

some of a number of scholars who have discussed the history and effects of what Allen labels a “classicist discourse” in relation to music in South Asia in the twentieth century, according to which, Allen writes, “a ‘classical’ musical tradition [is defined] hierarchically in contradistinction to a variety of non-classical others” (1998:23). They have drawn attention to the ways in which this discourse, in the twentieth century, “[incorporated] colonial European alongside indigenous Indian modes of thought” (Allen 1998:23-25) and was inflected by burgeoning Hindu nationalism (see for example Moro 2004: 189-193).

In the case of *khyāl*, like *thumrī*, this discursive re-branding occurred at the same time as a process of musical classicisation. For *khyāl*, this musical shift involved many of the elements Manuel identifies as occurring in the classicisation of *thumrī*, including a slowing down of the metre and a greater focus on the process of *vistār*, borrowing from the *dhrupad ālāp*, developments often attributed to the singer Amir Khan, and sometimes credited to the influence on his style of Abdul Wahid Khan (see Clayton 2000: 50 -51 and Wade 1984: 265-273).

Schofield notes that this is not the first time in the history of Indian art music that such a discursive process had occurred, describing a similar process of classicisation at the seventeenth-century Mughal court. She argues that the discursive shift that occurred around the turn of the twentieth century would be best characterised as a “re-classicization” of Indian music. Furthermore, she suggests “that Indian music has in all likelihood been subject to a series of classicizations and re-classicizations under various discursive and political regimes throughout the 2000 years of its written history” (2010: footnote 18). It would seem that classical status is inherently precarious; that it can never be achieved in perpetuity, but rather that it is only ever the temporary outcome of an ongoing process of classicisation and re-classicisation.²⁶ Schofield demonstrates that the discursive classicisation of Hindustani music had already occurred long before the period of musical and social transition around the turn of the twentieth century; I would suggest that it has continued afterwards, too. In the case of *thumrī*, uncertainty and differences of opinion about the genre’s classicality continued to influence the words and behaviour of musicians and music-lovers even when I conducted my fieldwork in the early years of the twenty-first century.

In his discussion of the “classicist discourse” in relation to South Indian classical music, Allen suggests that “the dyadic discourse may have incurred costs as well as benefits”, considering the possibility that “in the process of emphasizing the pure classical-ness of Karnataka music, other

²⁶ Borrowing terminology from gender studies, one might describe classicality as “performative”. Judith Butler, who most famously theorised the performativity of gender, writes that “gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*” (1988: 519). Likewise classicality would seem to be performative insofar as classical status is not a stable identity for any musical genre (including *khyāl*) but instead the result of a discursive process, involving the repetition of linguistic, musical and other acts.

forms of (perhaps quite intimately related) musical expression had to be made less so” (1998: 26). In the context of the ongoing classicisation of *khyāl* in North Indian music, *thumrī* serves as a useful rhetorical foil, as the less-than-classical, relatively light “other” to the now fully classical and serious *khyāl*, serving to elevate *khyāl* by comparison. This discursive move places *thumrī* in a position similar to the one that used to be occupied by *khyāl*, when it was conceived of as the romantic, emotional, popular “other” to the serious, esoteric *dhrupad* (Sanyal and Widdess 2004: 53-58). Additionally, casting *thumrī* as *the* quintessential courtesans’ genre masks the fact that courtesans used to sing *khyāl*, too (see Manuel 1989: 83 and Das Gupta 2005: 474).²⁷ Throughout the twentieth century, *thumrī* appears as *khyāl*’s semi-classical “other”, a position which I would read partially as a result of the ongoing re-inscription of *khyāl* as a classical genre.²⁸

Allen writes of the importance of *rāg* within South Asian constructions of classicality: “At the heart of the classicist discourse in Indian music, shining as its crown jewel, is the concept of *raga* (indeed some scholars use *raga-music* as a synonym for classical music)” (1998:29). Accordingly, in discussions of *thumrī*’s musical characteristics, musicians normally attribute the genre’s “semi-classical” categorisation to the fact that greater flexibility with respect to *rāg* is permitted in *thumrī* than in either *khyāl* or *dhrupad*. In a performance of *thumrī*, for example, the soloist can briefly depart from the main *rāg* of the composition, either by suggesting different *rāgs* or by altering the pitch of particular scale degrees, so as to produce *miśra* (“mixed”) versions of the *rāg* they are singing. In *khyāl* and *dhrupad*, on the other hand, any such move would be judged an error on the part of the performer. When describing this peculiarly semi-classical characteristic, musicians often talk in terms of musical “strictness”. Comparing *thumrī* with *khyāl*, Sunanda Sharma said in interview that she views *khyāl* as “very, very *śāstra*” and “very much within the rules, strict discipline”, while *thumrī*, she said, is “beyond *śāstra*” (personal communication, 2010). The singer K. Upendra Bhat explained, “When you are singing *khyāl*, there [are] certain rules and regulations ..., but when you are singing *thumrī*, you are free” (personal communication, 2011). Similarly, in his book, *An Introduction to Indian Music*, B. Chaitanya Deva writes that the musical “grammar is much laxer” in *thumrī* than in *dhrupad* and *khyāl* (1974: 41).

²⁷ Qureshi makes a similar point about the relative status of the *sāra gī* and *tablā*: although both used to be played by male musicians who were part of courtesan communities, only the *sāra gī* has retained the stigma of this former association, while the *tablā* has managed to escape (1997: 27).

²⁸ Richard Widdess (personal communication, 2012) has pointed out that this helps to explain the prejudice against *dhrupad* today, as revealed in claims by *khyāl* singers that the genre is out-of-date and nearly extinct. If *khyāl* singers wish to claim that their own genre is the main classical genre of modern North Indian classical music, then it is necessary to play down any claims that *dhrupad* might have to that position, by suggesting that the genre belongs in the past.

Many musicians hold up the emphasis on *rāg* in *khyāl* against what they consider to be a comparable emphasis on the lyrics in light musical genres. Peter Manuel, reflecting this perceived opposition, places the genres of Indian music on a spectrum, ranging from “music-dominated” classical genres at one extreme to “text-dominated” light genres at the other. In this formulation, *thumrī* is normally either grouped with light genres, as a genre in which the text is considered fundamental, or else, as in Manuel’s spectrum, is placed in an intermediate position, somewhere in between the classical and light genres of Indian music. Deva, continuing his description of *thumrī*, writes that, “Here the words ... have as much a dominant role as the music, unlike *dhrupad* and *kheyāl* where music is of first importance” (1974:63). I discussed some of the musical implications of this view in greater depth in the last chapter, in which I drew attention to the widespread idea that ensuring the intelligibility of the lyrics and reflecting their emotional content musically is of greater importance in *thumrī* than in *khyāl* and *dhrupad*. Thus Deva writes that in *khyāl* and *dhrupad* it may be that the “meaning of the text gets mutilated”, whereas “in *thumri*, *bhajan*, *padam* or *javali*, this will be inexcusable, because the beauty of such forms lies in the close synthesis of semantic content and musical mood” (1974: 41).

For some, *thumrī* acquires a semi-classical character in part because of its accessibility and popularity. S. V. Gokhale writes that “A Thumri is simple, easy to follow” (1990: 4). Likewise, Projesh Banerjee notes *thumrī*’s “appeal for the unsophisticated many” (1986: 6). Peter Manuel writes that the decline of aristocratic in favour of bourgeois patronage of North Indian classical music led to the decline of *dhrupad* and the ascendance of *thumrī* because “[*thumrī*] is inherently more accessible and sentimental than *dhrupad* or *khayāl*” (1989: 80). Chaitanya Desai explains at length why he believes that *thumrī* appeals to the “common listener”:

The common listener dislikes major gamuk ... and hates to hear the bombardment of tanas, both being essential parts of Khayāl. As the common listeners do not understand the beauty of a Raga and the classical Tala, he is bored by Raga-alapa and Layakari. Also, he wants to listen to and enjoy some poetry in the singing which Khayāl rarely supplies in full or in a coherent manner. [A] Khayāl singer with [a] sweet voice is also a rarity. Thumri music fulfils all [the] conditions necessary to satisfying the common man’s thirst for music and therefore it is called semi-classical music (1990: 8).

The idea that *thumrī* is especially popular and accessible forms part of a particular set of claims which certain musicians and scholars make about the classicality of *thumrī* relative to other genres of North Indian classical music. This contradicts another set of claims, discussed later, in which commentators argue that *thumrī* is a genre that can only be understood by music connoisseurs.

Thumrī’s overall aesthetic also contributes to its semi-classical character. Musicians and listeners often point out that while a variety of different *rasas* may be evoked in performances

of *khyāl*, *thumrī* is normally restricted to conveying *śrī gāra rasa*, or a romantic mood. Deva writes that *thumrī* is characterised by a “mood of soft and fine sentiments”, continuing that “the whole aim here is to create an atmosphere of romance and what the Indian calls as *sringara*: a love song describing the joy of union, the pangs of separation, uncertainty of anticipation and nostalgia of memory” (1974: 41). He continues, later, that *thumrī* “is a very ‘light’ form, extremely lyrical” and that its “sentiment is usually erotic, often bordering on the vulgarly sensuous” (63). Likewise, M. R. Gautam writes, “The predominant theme of the *thumrī* is erotic fantasy” (2001: 50). Many of the musicians whom I interviewed, too, drew particular attention to the importance of *śrī gāra rasa* in *thumrī* performances, over and above other qualities. There are also frequent references to *śrī gāra rasa*, love and romance in the marketing of *thumrī*, for example in advertisements for semi-classical concerts and on CD liners notes. The Gramophone Company of India, for example, has released a number of CDs of different performers (including Sipra Bose, Nirmala Devi, Naina Devi and Barkat Ali Khan) singing *thumrī* and other semi-classical genres under the heading *Thumri: The Music of Love*. The liner notes to all of these CDs begin, “Thumri – the song of love, of romance, passion and pining”. Another series of CDs, released by Music Today, of *thumrīs* and *dādrās* by Lakshmi Shankar, Girija Devi, Shobha Gurtu and Ajoy Chakraborty is titled *Shringār: The Many Moods of Love*. The liner notes to one of these recordings begins, “Of all the rasas – those exquisite flavours of emotions and sentiments that permeate Indian art – the most celebrated is Shringar, the mood of love.” They continue, “In music perhaps no genre is as ... evocative of this rasa as Thumri”. Yet another CD series, also related by Music Today, is titled *Expressions of Love: Thumri and Dadra*. The liner notes to the CD by Shanti Hiranand in this series of recordings start, “Thumri and Dadra are perhaps the most evocative of classical forms that give expression to the supreme emotion of love in all its colours and dimensions”. The front cover of this CD depicts Hiranand singing in the foreground, with the silhouette of two lovers looking at each other in the middle ground, against the backdrop of a sunset (or perhaps a sunrise). In these descriptions, the romantic character of *thumrī* and other semi-classical genres renders them distinct from the more serious *khyāl* and *dhrupad*.

Many musicians also draw attention to a difference in the type of ornamentation and vocal techniques they use in classical and semi-classical genres respectively. Chaitanya Desai, for example, writes that *thumrī* “uses meend, khatka and all light graces” but that “the forceful Gamak of Dhrupad and Khyal has no place in Thumri” (1990: 7). Similarly, in describing the typical characteristics of *thumrī* style, Sunil Bose writes that “Embellishments like ... *meend*, *murkis*, *kan*, *khatka* and *pukar* all play a very important role in developing the *Bols* (that is, *Bol-banana*) and as such there seems to be hardly any scope for the use of *gamak* or long and heavy *taan* or *sargum* in Thumri” (1990: 56). In both of these descriptions, the correct rendering of *thumrī* is not only dependent on using the appropriate ornamentation for the genre, but also on

avoiding ornamentation that is associated with other genres, in particular the classical genres *khyāl* and *dhrupad*. The musicologist Deepak Raja describes *thumrī* as an “ornamentation-dominant” genre (2009: 260). For him, it is not merely the fact that *thumrī* has its own ornamentation, different from the ornamentation associated with *khyāl* or *dhrupad*, that characterises the genre; rather, the presence of ornamentation itself characterises *thumrī*, while any ornamentation used in *khyāl* is unmarked and is heard merely as a natural part of the musical language. (I will discuss *thumrī*’s characteristic ornamentation further in the next chapter, where I consider the gendered connotations it evokes.)

Statements on the musical differences between classical and semi-classical genres occur in a context in which there is considerable anxiety about the possibility that the distinctions between different genres might become blurred. Both musicians and musicologists speak of the importance of maintaining a stylistic boundary between classical and semi-classical genres. This informs discussions about ornamentation, for example when musicians note the importance of avoiding certain ornamentation in *thumrī*, and also a particular strand of scholarly debate in twentieth century Indian musicology concerning the musical development of *khyāl*, in which scholars lament what they consider to be an increasing trend towards using the characteristic features of *thumrī* in *khyāl*. In his book, *Indian Musical Traditions*, Vamanrao Deshpande claims that although “formerly [the] two spheres of music – the classical and the light – were rigidly kept aloof from each other”, “today ... it has become obligatory to mix up these two even in *khayal*-singing”. He believes that this is a result of musicians’ desires “to pander to the taste of the general public”. Adopting an ominous tone in a lengthy passage dedicated to outlining a recent “deterioration” in North Indian classical music, he writes, “Though today *khayal gayaki* can still be separately identified, the line of demarcation between the strict artistic purity of the *khayal* and the emotional intensity of *thumari* has become increasingly blurred” (1987 [1973]: 120-122). He describes what he sees as the increasing influence of *thumrī* on *khyāl* as a move towards “Romanticism”, and away from the “traditional” aspects of *khyāl* performances, including “the meticulous and rigorous attention formerly paid to the *bandish*”, which he labels “Classicism” in North Indian classical music (166-167).

The scholar and music connoisseur Deepak Raja has adopted Deshpande’s terminology in his own writings on *khyāl*, sharing Deshpande’s worries about the “infusion of melodic expressions characteristic of the semi-classical, folk, regional, and popular genres of music into *khayāla* vocalism”. He believes that this has occurred as the result of the fact that many leading performers of semi-classical genre have died, which, he believes, “[leaves] the [semi-classical] genres starved of quality musicianship”. As a result of this, he argues, *khyāl* “attempted to fill the vacuum” by “allowing ... itself to drift towards a more explicit ornate emotionalism” (2009: 279). He believes that this has not only had a negative effect on *khyāl*, threatening its

“distinctiveness”, but has also had a negative effect on *ṭhumrī*, rendering it “all but extinct” (279-280). For now, he believes, *khyāl*’s “architecture”, that is, the overall melodic schema produced by the process of *vistār*, allows it to remain distinct from semi-classical genres; he fears, however, that this too might be under threat “if, and when, the establishment is forced to reckon with the post-structuralist /post-modernist revolt against architecture” (14).²⁹ Another version of the typically negative attitude to blurring between genres is revealed in an anecdote in music-lover Kumar Prasad Mukherji’s memoir, *The Lost World of Hindustani Music*. There, he writes of one musician mocking another by suggesting that in order to sing *ṭhumrī* all he need do is change the *tāl* of his *khyāl* performances (2006: 68).³⁰

Raja’s views about the borrowing of characteristics from *ṭhumrī* in *khyāl*, however, are not wholly negative: he argues that one characteristic way of using the text of the composition in *Agra-gharānā khyāl* “has been inspired by the *ṭhumarī* genre and greatly enhances the colourful quality of *khayāla* renditions” (31). The vocalist Ulhas Kashalkar addresses this issue in his foreword to Raja’s book: he is clear about his belief that “vocalists who have introduced emotionally explicit (or lively) elements of *ṭhumarī*, *ṭappā*, *bhajanās*, and folk music into the genre have enriched it greatly” (xi), while also noting the importance of sustaining the “integrity” of *khyāl* (xii). M.R. Gautam is similarly ambivalent. He warns against “over-indulgence” in the “aesthetic aspects” and “other more frivolous ornamentations” of *ṭhumrī* in *khyāl* (2001: 75); nevertheless he celebrates *khyāl*-singers’ “adoption of the aesthetic expressiveness” of *ṭhumrī*, describing it as an “enrichment” of the genre (46). He writes that “*khyāl* is rich in its inheritance, having combined in one way or another the cardinal aspects of practically all forms of Hindustani music from the *dhruvapada* to the *ṭhumarī* and *ṭappa*” (46). This particular argument forms part of a more widespread set of arguments made by some musicians and music-lovers, in which they claim the superiority of *khyāl* over other genres by suggesting that *khyāl* combines the best aspects of those other genres. In spite of this recurrent theme in discussions about musical borrowing, however, the vast majority of musicians and listeners remain anxious about any stylistic blurring between genres and stress the importance of maintaining their distinctiveness from each other.³¹ Within this context, there is significant social pressure on musicians to distinguish clearly between classical and semi-classical genres, such that the different genres of North Indian classical music remain stylistically distinctive.

²⁹ Raja’s stylistic descriptions are not uncontroversial (see Stevenson 2010). However, it is beyond the scope of this study to analyse the accuracy of Raja’s claims about the development of *khyāl* style. Nevertheless, his arguments reveal a general anxiety towards blurring stylistic boundaries that helps to explain the motivations of *ṭhumrī* singers when they talk about or perform *ṭhumrī*.

³⁰ Manuel also rehearses a version of this historical narrative, according to which the boundaries between *khyāl* and *ṭhumrī* have, in the course of the twentieth century, become increasingly blurred (1989: 95).

³¹ This is part of more general anxiety about slippages between musical categories, including a fear of stylistic blurring between different *gharānās*.

Singers adopt a variety of strategies when it comes to negotiating *ṭhumrī*'s lesser status relative to *khyāl* and *dhrupad* and the ways in which that might impact upon their own personal standing within North Indian classical music. Some choose not to sing *ṭhumrī* at all, preferring to be associated only with the more prestigious *khyāl* and *dhrupad*. Pandits Rajan and Sajan Mishra (brothers), and Rajan's two sons, Ritesh and Rajnish Mishra, are a case in point. Hailing from a family of *sāra gīt* players, their pedagogical lineage contains great expertise in *ṭhumrī*. They consider themselves members of the Banaras *gharānā*, whose singers are most associated with *ṭhumrī* and other semi-classical genres. Tulika Ghosh for example, learned *ṭhumrī* from Rajan and Sajan's father and teacher, Hanuman Prasad Mishra. Despite this family expertise in *ṭhumrī*, however, Rajan and Sajan and Ritesh and Rajnish Mishra choose not to perform the genre in public. They normally conclude their concerts with a *bhajan*, a light-classical devotional genre, where others would sing a *ṭhumrī*. Rajan and Sajan are often called upon to explain this position, including at two concerts which I attended, at which they received a request to perform *ṭhumrī* from an audience member. Both times they explained their decision to not sing *ṭhumrī* by noting that their *gharānā*, the Banaras *gharānā*, is often feted for its *ṭhumrī* style, with the result that the Banaras *gharānā khyāl* style is relatively neglected. They suggested that singers in the Banaras *gharānā* who sing both in *ṭhumrī* and *khyāl* often get known merely for their *ṭhumrī* renditions and attributed their decision not to sing *ṭhumrī* to their wish to raise the profile of the Banaras *gharānā khyāl* style. In doing so, they also raise the profile of the Banaras *gharānā* itself, as well as their own personal status, by attaching themselves primarily to the more prestigious musical genre, *khyāl*.³² The Mishra family are not the only singers to shun *ṭhumrī* in favour of an exclusive focus on *khyāl*. Daniel Neuman notes, for example, that female performers, particularly courtesans, might wish to avoid "lighter forms" because of the "social identification of these lighter repertoires with the courtesan tradition (1980: 207), writing also of the advantages that come when a singer can claim that she is a member of a *gharānā* (101). By attaching themselves only to *khyāl* and in some cases even refusing to sing a genre that is a part of their family heritage, singers can claim greater prestige and social status. In doing so, however, they also, albeit unintentionally, reinforce the hierarchy of genres that allowed *khyāl* to attain greater prestige than *ṭhumrī* in the first place.

Other singers perform both *khyāl* and *ṭhumrī*, but often insist that their primary specialism is *khyāl*, while *ṭhumrī* is only a secondary interest. This position is made clear in singers' biographies, for example, in which they emphasise their classical training in *khyāl* or *dhrupad*,

³² It is interesting to note, however, that although they have removed *ṭhumrī* from their performance repertoire, the genre's aesthetic seems to have influenced their *khyāl* style. When I interviewed Ritesh Mishra, I asked him the musical features that he felt characterise the Banaras *gharānā khyāl* style. Amongst other things, he differentiated the Banaras style of *khyāl* from others by noting that, in the Banaras style, it is important to ensure the intelligibility of the lyrics and to express their emotional content in music. These are musical characteristics more normally associated with *ṭhumrī* style than with *khyāl*. Although the Mishra family may have removed the genre *ṭhumrī* from their repertoire, its aesthetic priorities continue to influence their rendition of *khyāl*.

but mention any expertise in *ṭhumrī* as an afterthought, perhaps in a brief sentence at the end. This also reflects the way in which *ṭhumrī* appears in their concerts, as a light-weight, concluding item after the more serious, classical performance that was the main focus of the event. Many of the singers who agreed to be interviewed by me about *ṭhumrī* stressed at the outset that they are not experts or specialists in *ṭhumrī*, but *khyāl* singers first and foremost. One described herself as “not a fully-fledged *ṭhumrī* singer”, despite displaying great expertise in her very beautiful *ṭhumrī* recordings. Ulhas Kashalkar has released a CD consisting solely of *ṭhumrī* recordings, but was unwilling to talk to me about the genre, preferring to discuss *khyāl*, the genre on which he focuses.

Of those singers who continue to sing *ṭhumrī*, many have adopted discursive strategies to raise its status within the hierarchy of North Indian classical music: this often involves talking about *ṭhumrī* in specifically classical terms. Singers who perform both *khyāl* and *ṭhumrī* often claim, for example, that it is impossible to sing *ṭhumrī* without a classical training. Shubhra Guha made this point when I interviewed her: “If you [do not have] a good *talīm*, a good knowledge of the rhythmic cycle and at the same time *dhrupad-dhamar* and *khyāl talīm*, you won’t be able to be a very good, solid, competent *ṭhumrī* singer. No, you have to know *dhrupad*. You have to know *khyāl*. You have to know all these things.”³³

Talking about the possibility of using mixed *rāgs* in *ṭhumrī*, some singers state that handling this flexibility, in order to be successful, requires an even greater mastery of *rāg* than that required for classical genres. They note that the performer must have a thorough knowledge not only of the *rāg* he or she is performing, but also of the “surrounding” *rāgs*, those *rāgs* which one might briefly suggest during the performance, and of how to mix *rāgs* tastefully. Rashmi Agarwal, for example, told me that she had to learn *khyāl* before learning *ṭhumrī* because “you need to learn the *rāgas* before you learn [*ṭhumrī*]” (2009, personal communication). She, like a number of other musicians, describes mixing *rāgs* as akin to arranging flowers, noting that it requires great skill and taste on the part of the musician. She notes that not all combinations of *rāgs* are aesthetically pleasing. Similarly, Shubhra Guha lamented the fact that students who approach her for lessons in *ṭhumrī* will often have already learnt some *ṭhumrī* compositions without properly learning the *rāgs* on which they are based. She said, “Unless you know the *rāg Khamāj*, how it goes, what are the main phrases, how do you [sing] freely in the structure? You have to know the *rāg*. You have to know the composition. You have to know how to deviate [from] the *rāg*. In *ṭhumrī*, [you have to know] how to take liberty” (2010, personal

³³ Despite the fact that many *ṭhumrī* singers state, like Guha, that it is necessary to know *dhrupad* in order to perform *ṭhumrī*, very few if any are able to perform *dhrupad* in public. Many singers, however, specialise in and perform both *ṭhumrī* and *khyāl*, including my teacher and Guha herself.

communication). The singer Prabha Atre makes a similar point in her book, *Enlightening the Listener* (2000: 107).

Claims such as these, which are made frequently by *ṭhumrī* singers nowadays, have a long history. In 1925, the *ṭhumrī* singer Dilip Kumar Roy presented a paper at one of Bhatkhande's All India Music Conferences, in which he argued the merits of *ṭhumrī*. Like modern-day *ṭhumrī* singers, he argued that "a Thumri singer must learn Kheyal well if he should want to sing Thumri effectively", since "in Thumri there is almost boundless scope for the introduction of beauties of the Kheyal style". Furthermore, he argued, a "sound knowledge" of *khyāl* is required in order to know how "to pass from one Raga to other" (1990 [1925]: 33).

It is not only in their statements about *ṭhumrī* that singers classicise the genre: they also do so musically. Manuel notes that the early-twentieth-century development of the *bol banāo ṭhumrī* partially constituted a "classicization" of the genre. He credits the input of *khyāl* singers who started taking up *ṭhumrī* with the genre's achieving "an unprecedented degree of musical sophistication and expressiveness" (1989: 82). In particular, he identifies a reduction in *ṭhumrī*'s overall tempo which, in turn, afforded a greater musical focus on "leisurely and systematic *bol banāo*" in the form of the "systematic exposition of *rāg*" that constitutes the process of *vistār* (1986: 479 and see also 1989: 83-85). As a result of this "adoption of methodical development in slow tempo", he writes, "the new *bol banāo ṭhumrī* ... came superficially to resemble the strictly classical *barā khayāl*" (1989: 73). Associated primarily with the exposition of the *rāg* in *khyāl* and *dhrupad*, *vistār* ("expansion") is a classical feature par excellence. It is the process through which musicians introduce a *rāg* to their audience in performance, by bringing in successively higher notes of the *rāg* in turn, thus gradually expanding the overall range of the performance.³⁴ Calling it "architecture" or "architectural linearity", Deepak Raja, for example, describes it as the "defining characteristic" of *khyāl* (2009: 6).³⁵ The use of *vistār* in *ṭhumrī*, then, carries particularly classical connotations.

In modern-day performances of *ṭhumrī*, different singers utilise elements of *vistār* in different ways and to different extents. They also express a variety of opinions about its role in *ṭhumrī*. Many argue that the step-wise exposition of the *rāg* is unimportant in *ṭhumrī*, since the primary focus of the genre is on rendering the nuances of the lyrics of the composition. Arvind Parikh, for example, argues that in *ṭhumrī*, unlike in *khyāl*, "the rules of Badhat ["expansion",

³⁴ Richard Widdess has discussed the logic of *vistār* in performance in depth (2011).

³⁵ Some musicians and scholars point out that *vistār* has become increasingly prioritised in *khyāl* over the course of the twentieth century, such that it is now expected of all *khyāl* singers, even those who do not consider *vistār* an important part of their stylistic heritage. Rajshekhar Mansur noted in interview that in his style of *khyāl*, taught to him by his father Mallikarjun Mansur, the *rāg* is not introduced in the step-by-step manner that is implied in the process of *vistār*, but rather by means of singing different characteristic phrases of the *rāg* in turn. Deepak Raja believes that *vistār* in *khyāl* originated in the Kirana *gharānā* style, but that all stylistic traditions of *khyāl* have increasingly adopted it as standard over the course of the twentieth century (2009: 5).

equivalent to “*vistār*” in the context of music] can be followed more in terms of phrase development rather than individual note development” since “it is the mood of the presentation that dictates the treatment of melodic phrases and their position in the scale” (1990: 57). On the other hand, the singer Moumita Mitra insisted on the importance of *vistār* in *ṭhumrī*, saying that “The whole thing is based on *vistār* only.” She believes that this is especially pronounced in *pūrab a g ṭhumrī*, more so than in the *Pa jāb a g*. (These are two categories of *ṭhumrī* style, discussed later in the chapter.) This statement reflects a more widespread belief that *pūrab a g ṭhumrī* is more classical than *Pa jāb a g ṭhumrī* (Manuel: 1989: 89).

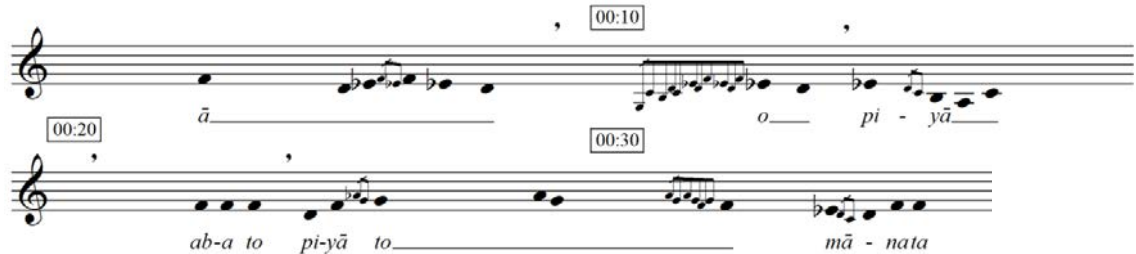
Mitra’s own *ṭhumrī* performances display a variety of approaches to *vistār*. She has so far recorded and released only one *ṭhumrī*, in *rāg miśra Sohanī* (2012). This particular *ṭhumrī* is informed only minimally by the process of *vistār*. is the culmination of the first line of the composition: Mitra reaches only a few seconds into the performance and returns frequently to throughout, leaving her little scope for the note-by-note upward expansion of *vistār*. In this case, however, this is a necessary consequence of adhering to the *rāg* she is performing. In his *Raga Guide*, Joep Bor points out that *Sohanī* is characterised by the fact that is usually starts on G and then “proceeds straight to high Sa or Re”, progressing in such a way that “the melody always returns to the upper octave” (1999: 156). When performing in *rāg Sohanī*, then, any extended period of *vistār* in the middle octave would demonstrate the performer’s ignorance of the *rāg*, over-riding any association with classicality that the process of *vistār* might evoke for knowledgeable listeners. (This recording does, however, contain the rhythmic intensification that normally accompanies the melodic development of *vistār*.) Though not officially released, Mitra has put other recordings of hers onto her webpage; she has made others available as videos on youtube. Her *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Khamāj*, accessible at the time of writing at <http://moumitamitra.multiply.com/video>, is a much clearer display of the way in which *vistār* might structure a *ṭhumrī* performance.

The *ṭhumrīs* that my teacher, Sunanda Sharma, teaches her pupils and sings in performance usually make use of an ever-expanding melodic range. (See, for example, her rendition of the *ṭhumrī* “*He mā, kārī badariyā barase*”, transcribed in full in the Conclusion to this thesis in figure 6.1. I also discuss the significance of Sharma’s use of *vistār* in this particular performance further in Chapter 5.) When I was learning with her, the process of *vistār* informed the vocal exercises we sang at the beginning of lessons and her teaching of *khyāl ālāp* and *tāns*: it seemed only natural that it also structured the parts of the lessons in which she taught me *ṭhumrī*, too. (This would seem to be something she has learnt from her teacher, Girija Devi. Devi’s use of *vistār* is one of a number of classical features of her *ṭhumrī* performances: I will discuss other such features later in this chapter.)

Bhimsen Joshi's recording of "*Piyā to mānata nāhī*", transcribed in full in figure 4.1, is an example of how *vistār* might function over the course of a *ṭhumrī* performance. The table in figure 4.2 shows the overall pitch progression of the performance. I have divided it into segments using the *mukhṛā* as a sign-post that marks the end of each successive segment. Note the overall expansion of the register in this performance, as Joshi introduces successively higher scale degrees in each section. The last section, from J to Q, is longer than the others. Within this section, there is an overall rise in pitch, continuing the upward progress of the performance, before a fall again, returning to the lower part of the middle octave so that Joshi can sing the *mukhṛā* and move on to the *laggī*. Note that the overall melodic contour of the *laggī*, itself, seems to be informed by the process of *vistār* in microcosm, as if the process starts again at the beginning of the section. This underlines the structural separation between the main metered section and the *laggī* that follows. (In other *ṭhumrī* performances, such as Sunanda Sharma's "*He mā, kārī badariyā barase*", transcribed in the Conclusion of this thesis, there is a similar structural separation between the *ālāp* and the metered section, where *vistār* occurs in the *ālāp* and then appears to start again after the introduction of the composition.)

Figure 4.1, full transcription of Joshi (2002b), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Kāfī*.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ E. See CD 2, track 1.



A *nā - hī mā - na-ta* **B** *nā - hī ?ā*

C *ā re pi-yā to mā - na-ta nā - hī*

D *mo-rā pi-yā mā - na-ta mā - na-ta*

a-ba to pi-yā to mā - na-ta

E *na - hī o kau-na gu-na-na se*

F *ma - nā - va re*

G *kau - na gu-na-na se ma-nā -*

H *- va re a-ba to pi-ya to mā - na-ta nā - hī*

mā - na-ta nā - hī mā - na-ta nā - hī

I *mā - na-ta nā*

J *a-ba to pi-yā to mā-na-ta nā - hī mo -*



 - - - rā pi-yā ai-so ni-tu-ra ān - jā - - - 3 ĥa bhai-yo



 ai-so ni-tu-ra - - - ai-so ni-tu-ra ān - jā - na - - -



 bha - - - 14 - - -



 - yo mo-rā pi-yā - - - ni-tu-ra ni-tu-ra ni-tu-ra ai-so - - -



 ni-tu-ra - - - ān - jā - - - na bha-yo prī-ta pu-ra-nī



 jā-na-ta nā - - - prī-ta pu-ra - - - nī - - - o - - - prī-ta pu-ra-nī - - - jā-na-ta



 nā - - - - - hī-re a - ba kau-na gu-na-na se ma - nā - va re



 pi-yā - - - to mā-na-ta nā-hī mā-na-ta nā-hī mā - na-ta nā - hī pi - yā - - - to



 mā - na-ta nā - hī - - - re - - - ho - - - pi - yā to mā - na-ta nā - hī



 pi-yā mā - na - ta nā - hī - - - re mā - na - ta nā -

- hī re_____ pi - yā mā - na - ta pi - yā to mā - na - ta nā - hī

pi - yā to mā - na - ta nā - hī pi - yā to_____ mā - na - ta nā -

- hī_____ re mā - na - ta nā - hī re_____ ho_____ pi - yā to

mā - na - ta nā - hī re_____ ho_____ pi - yā to mā - na - ta

06:10 , 06:20

nā - - - - hī

Figure 4.2, overall melodic development in Joshi (2002b), *thumrī* in *rāg Kāfī*.

Segment	Highest Note	Lowest Note
<i>Ālāp:</i>		
Start – A	P (touches on D)	
Main metered section:		
A – C	D	
C – E	<u>N</u>	—
E – H	<u>N</u>	R
H – J	<u>N</u> (touches on)	—
J – Q		R
<i>Laggī:</i>		
Q – S	D	R
S – V	<u>N</u>	R
V - AA		R
Unmetered ending:		
AA – end	<u>N</u> (touches on)	P

Bhimsen Joshi is a renowned classical vocalist, specialising in *khyāl*. It is not surprising that he would have grown accustomed to using classical structural features such as *vistār* when he performs and that therefore these might also appear in his *thumrī* performances. It is reasonable to assume that this kind of overall structure would be just as instinctive for him as it is, for example, for my teacher, and as it started to become for me when I took lessons with her. Joshi's use of *vistār* in *thumrī* is also in line with the overall classicism of his *thumrī* renditions. I will discuss other specifically classical features of his *thumrī* later in this chapter.

Shobha Gurtu, though a semi-classical specialist, is known for the classicism of her performances. In a review of a performance she gave in 1990, P. G. Burde describes Gurtu as “the high priestess of a brand of *thumri* rendered in *khayal* style” (*Times of India*, 13th October 1990). In another review, Amarendra Dhaneshwar describes her *thumrī* and *dādrā* performances as having “a certain classical discipline about them”. Giving details of one particular performance, he continues “the build-up was gradual and leisurely and the song had a restful air” (*Times of India*, 7th March 1995). He also remarks on her skill in evoking *rāgs* other than the main *rāg* of the composition, noting that she “deftly brought in sequences from *ragas* like Malhar and Des to add colour” to a performance in a different *rāg*. Sarala Bhide, who studied with Gurtu, writes of the “basic concrete and dignified framework” Gurtu employs in her *thumrī* performances, noting the influence on them of her training in *khyāl* (1990: 74).

In part, this “dignified” character results from the slow tempo of Gurtu's performances, as Bhide notes (73). The impression of a slow tempo is magnified by a low note density, particularly towards the start of Gurtu's *thumrī* renditions. Her performances thus constitute a continuation of the slowing-down trend which Manuel identifies as occurring in *thumrī* in the early years of the twentieth century and which Manuel considers a form of classicisation. I would like to suggest, additionally, that Gurtu's reputation for classicism in *thumrī* is also a result of the way in which she uses *vistār* in her performances and it is this feature that lies behind comments about her “classical discipline” and the “gradual and leisurely build-up” of her *thumrī* performances. Note the gradually increasing melodic range of the passage in figure 4.3, from her recording of “*Kita gae bāvarī banāke*”. This constitutes an instance of *vistār* in microcosm and is typical of the classical nature of Gurtu's *bol banāo*. Here the *mukhrā* itself concludes on (shown here from E: 4 to F: 1). In this passage, Gurtu starts off in the lower part of the middle octave. Then, in each successive phrase-unit, she uses increasingly high pitches, finally reaching at F. (This is summarised in the table in figure 4.4, where I have divided the passage into phrase-units, breaking every time Gurtu pauses to take a breath.) The way in which she concludes phrase-unit 5 on N and then pauses on in phrase-unit 6 creates a typically classical moment of arrival on . (Note that there are multiple melodic similarities between

successive phrase-units here, making them an instance of a successive variation strategy, as discussed in Chapter 2.)

Figure 4.3, extract from Gurtu (1992), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Khamāj*, 01:57 to 02:47.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A. See CD 2, track 2.

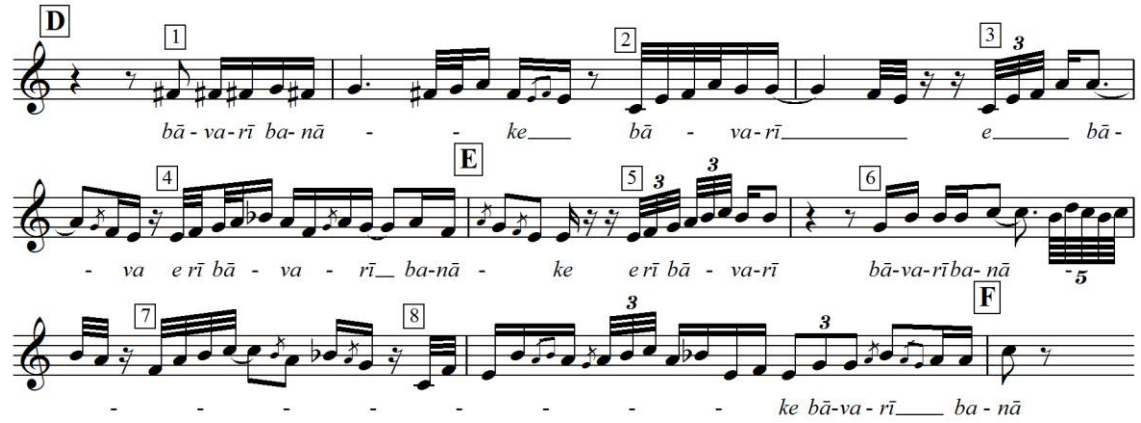


Figure 4.4, melodic development in extract from Gurtu (1992), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Khamāj*, 01:57 to 02:47.

Phrase-unit	Highest Note	Lowest Note	Longest Note
1.	D	G	P
2.	D	G	P
3.	D	G	D
4.	<u>N</u>	G	P
5.		G	N
6.	(touches on)	P	
7.		M	
8.		S	P

In other *ṭhumrī* performances, musicians use *vistār* in a variety of ways. Sometimes it does not seem to occur at all; sometimes it informs short passages, such as the one shown in figure 4.3; sometimes it informs the development of entire performances, such as the one in figure 4.1; sometimes it occurs only at the start of the performance, until the singer has reached and perhaps sung the *antarā* (which is usually in the upper register); and sometimes it appears to start anew each time the singer takes a break. A detailed examination of the different ways in which different singers use *vistār* in *ṭhumrī* and a comparison with the way in which it appears in other North Indian classical genres is beyond the scope of this chapter. It would,

nevertheless, appear to be a valuable project, given the importance musicians place on this process in distinguishing classical genres from other types of Indian music and given the power it has to affect how classical performances of *ṭhumrī* sound.

Another, related, musical feature with strongly classical connotations is *ālāp*, an unmetered section at the start of performances. (It is in the *ālāp* sections of *dhrupad* performances that *vistār* originated.) Like *vistār*, musicians adopt a variety of approaches to *ālāp* and to the singing of unmetered introductions in *ṭhumrī*. I will discuss this later in this chapter, when I consider the singer Girija Devi's use of *ālāp* in her *ṭhumrī* renditions.

Some classical features are more controversial when they appear in *ṭhumrī*. Since the early decades of the twentieth century, most *ṭhumrī* singers have avoided using *sārgam* and *tāns* in *ṭhumrī*. Although both of these musical features appear in the earliest *ṭhumrī* recordings, nowadays they are normally considered inappropriate in the genre and are characteristic features of *khyāl*. Manuel points out that when *ṭhumrī* singers started to avoid these classical features in performances of *ṭhumrī*, this was not a consequence of any lack of knowledge or skill on the part of *ṭhumrī* singers: he notes that the well-known *ṭhumrī* singers of the early to mid twentieth century were often highly skilled in *tāns* and that a training in semi-classical genres would often start with the ornamental genre *tappā*. Rather, Manuel attributes the removal of *tāns* from *ṭhumrī* to the development of the *bol banāo ṭhumrī*, when singers started to focus exclusively on “leisurely and systematic *bol banāo*” in the form of “sentimental *vistār* passages” (1989: 83). Avoiding *sārgam* and *tāns* in *ṭhumrī* helps singers to be able to render *ṭhumrī* distinctive from *khyāl*. It supports their claim that *ṭhumrī* should be devoted primarily to revealing nuances of the lyrics of the composition. Both of these techniques involve abstract musical processes, unrelated to any lyrics. *Sārgam* necessarily involves departing from the lyrics, setting the melody merely to the names of each scale degree. *Tāns* may or may not use the lyrics of the composition, but frequently render them unintelligible. Moumita Mitra, like many other *ṭhumrī* singers, stresses that she always avoids *sārgam* and *tāns* in her *ṭhumrī* renditions.

Nevertheless, some musicians do use both of these techniques in the *ṭhumrī* renditions. Musicians in the Kirana *gharānā* provide a good example of this. Abdul Karim Khan, for example, often used both *sārgam* and *tāns* in his *ṭhumrī* recordings (see for example Khan (2003b), extracts of which are transcribed in figures 4.5 and 4.6). Later in the century, his pupil's pupil, Bhimsen Joshi, uses *sārgam* and *tāns* in a similar manner (see Joshi 2004, transcribed in figure 4.7 and 4.8). Note the similarity of the start of the *sārgam* passages in figures 4.5 and 4.7. I will discuss this, and other instances of similarity between performances by Joshi and Khan, later in this chapter.

Figure 4.5, *sārgam* in extract from Khan (2003b), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Kirvānī*, 01:37 to 01:58.

Tāl = *kaharvā*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ F#. See CD 2, track 3.

re sa— dha pa re sa ma— ga re ga ma padha ma— padha ni sa ni dhapa
dha ni sa re ga re sa ni dhapa dha ke— ni dhapa ni dha— pa ma ga pa ma— ga re sa ma ga re
ga ma padhama padha ni sa re ga re sa ni dhapa ma so-ca sa-ma-jha na - dā

Figure 4.6, *tāns* in extract from Khan (2003b), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Kirvānī*, 03:19 to 03:39.

Tāl = *kaharvā*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ F#. See CD 2, track 4.

? na - dā - na e na - dā
ā - dā ā - dā
dā

Figure 4.7, *sargām* in extract from Joshi (2004), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Kirvānī*, 07:29 to 07:54.

Tāl = 16-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ C#. See CD 2, track 5.

na - dā— re pa— ri sa ma— ga re ga ma padha ma— pa dha ni—
sa ni dha pa dha pa ma pa dha ni sa— re.3 sa ni dha pa
dha ga sa ni dha pa ma ga re sa ni sa so - ca sa - ma - jha na

Figure 4.8, *tāns* in extract from Joshi (2004), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Kirvānī*, 13:11 to 13:24

(only Joshi's singing transcribed here).

Tāl = 16-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ C#. See CD 2, track 6.



This unorthodox approach to *ṭhumrī* exposes Kirana *gharānā* singers to criticism.³⁶ Vamanrao Deshpande, for example, comments on the classicism of Kirana *gharānā ṭhumrī*, noting its “unclear” word pronunciation amongst other things. As a result of this, he writes, *ṭhumrī* in this tradition is “a very attenuated *thumari*”. He notes that “according to critics the real *thumari* is the Purab *thumari*”, while the Kirana *ṭhumrī* is “in fact a *khayal* sung in the manner of a *thumari*” (1987: 24). The music critic Shanta Gokhale writes about a lecture demonstration on *ṭhumrī* given by Sarala Bhide, in which Bhide made fun of Kirana *gharānā* style *ṭhumrī* for the fact that it is difficult to make out the words in a Kirana-*gharānā ṭhumrī* performance (*Times of India*, 19th April 1991).

In an interview, I spoke with Bhimsen Joshi's pupil, K. Upendra Bhat, about *ṭhumrī* in the Kirana *gharānā*. He mentioned this somewhat unconventional use of *sārgam* in *ṭhumrī*, but insisted that it does not undermine the distinctiveness of *khyāl* from *ṭhumrī*. Rather, he explained ways in which a singer might use *sārgam* differently in classical and semi-classical genres. He sang a variety of different types of *sārgam*, explaining that *sārgam* in *ṭhumrī* (unlike *sārgam* in *khyāl*) should not be a matter of abstract musical calculations, but should reflect the emotions of the lyrics of the composition (2010, personal communication). K. Upendra Bhat's position on *sārgam* in *ṭhumrī* involves a careful negotiation of two, contradictory social pressures: the first, to sound like one's *guru* (particularly when one's *guru* is a singer of the stature of Bhimsen Joshi) and second, to ensure that one maintains a stylistic distinction between *ṭhumrī* and *khyāl*, avoiding blurring the musical characteristics of the two genres.

Another Kirana *gharānā* singer, Prabha Atre, offers another justification for the use of *sārgam* and *tāns* in *ṭhumrī*. In a chapter on *ṭhumrī* in her book *Enlightening the Listener*, which is an introductory guide to North Indian classical music, she celebrates what she considers the

³⁶ In this respect, the use of *sārgam* and *tāns* in *ṭhumrī* attracts much more attention than the use of *vistār*, which largely goes unnoticed and unpunished. One reason for this might be that *vistār* is much more widely used in *ṭhumrī* than *sārgam* or *tāns*. *Vistār* also appears in Banaras-style *ṭhumrī*, which critics often consider to be the “purest” form of *ṭhumrī*, and which often functions as a benchmark against which other forms are judged, while *sārgam* and *tāns*, by and large, do not.

genre's recent development "towards abstraction", such that "*thumri* has slowly been evolving as an abstract musical form relatively independent of words and their meaning" in which "*raag* itself [is] the source of inspiration" (2000: 101-107). She suggests that *tān* and *sārgam*, alongside *ālāp*, can "not only enhance the beauty of *thumri* but also add to its inherent abstract potential", writing that "compared to the phrases with *bol*-s in which phrases get coloured with the literary meaning of the words, *alaap*, *taan*, and *sārgam* are considered pure musical materials because they convey only musical meaning" (109).

Manuel notes that *sārgam* and *tāns* also appear in *thumrīs* sung by singers in the Patiala *gharānā*, including, most famously, the vocalist Bade Ghulam Ali Khan (1989: 127-128). Like their Kirana *gharānā* colleagues, this exposes them to criticism. Mohan Nadkarni believes that, other than Bade Ghulam Ali Khan and his brother Barkat Ali Khan, singers of this style of *thumrī* "appear more concerned to impress than express" (1990: 44). Deva, meanwhile, describes their style as "mercurial and libertine" (1974:63). In both of these descriptions, the technical difficulty of *tāns* is characterised as preventing the emotional expression which these critics feel is necessary in *thumrī*. (In a related argument, some phrase their criticisms of the Patiala *gharānā thumrī* by talking about its florid ornamentation, again noting that it seems to prioritise virtuosity over emotional expression: I will discuss this further in the next chapter.)

When noting her own avoidance of *sārgam* and *tāns* in *thumrī*, Moumita Mitra was careful to avoid criticising those well-known singers who do use these techniques in their singing, praising the Patiala-*gharānā* singer Ajoy Chakraborty for his sensitive use of these techniques in *thumrī*. As an up-and-coming young musician, there is considerable pressure on her to be stylistically conservative, whereas a well-known, widely respected and popular singer such as Ajoy Chakraborty may deviate from the accepted stance with impunity.

Some musicians do not dispute *thumrī*'s light classical reputation, instead celebrating it. When I interviewed Rekha Surya, for example, she noted her disapproval of the way in which many *khyāl* singers perform *thumrī*, saying that "knowledge of *rāg* is not enough to sing *thumrī*", but rather that "*thumrī* is all about *bol banānā*". She feels that *khyāl* singers' *thumrī* renditions often lack "structure", while *thumrī* singers should know how to "[mix] emotion with structure". She is also critical of the use of *sārgam* in *thumrī* and *ghazal*, which, she believes, is used merely "to dazzle audiences", but which "robs [a performance] of its romanticism" (2009, personal communication). Surya's statements about *thumrī* are appropriate to her position as a semi-classical specialist, who does not perform *khyāl*. They also respond to the general fear of blurring the boundaries between genres: by singing and describing a distinctly light-classical form of *thumrī*, she can lay claim to being able to perform a pure, unadulterated form of the genre. She normally bills her concerts as specifically light classical affairs, often celebrating the

romantic ethos of the musical she performs and normally singing *ṭhumrī* alongside *dādrā* and *ghazal*, two other light-classical forms.

Those singers, like Rekha Surya, who do not attempt to raise *ṭhumrī*'s status by emphasising its classicality find other ways to market their *ṭhumrī* performances. They might do this, for example, by celebrating the genre's especially emotional nature or by noting its inherent beauty. In the next sections of this chapter, I will discuss further some of the other strategies musicians employ in order to promote *ṭhumrī*, pointing out ways in which they utilise aspects of a variety of discourses about music.

For musicians, any statement about the classicality of *ṭhumrī* takes place in the context of a highly politicised rhetorical minefield, in which any misstep comes at the risk of discrediting their performances. To make *ṭhumrī* appear too classical makes it seem too like *khyāl* and lacking in distinctiveness; to make it seem not classical enough, however, damages its prestige and that of the people who perform it. Musicians' descriptions of *ṭhumrī*, as well as their musical decisions when performing the genre, represent a variety of different strategic positions and reveal a variety of responses to this situation.

Gharānā discourse

Closely related to discussions about the hierarchy of classicality in North Indian classical music is a discourse concerning musical transmission that centres on the concept of "*gharānā*". Within North Indian classical music, how musical knowledge is passed from one generation to the next is tied into ideas about classicality, authenticity and value. *Khyāl*, by and large, is transmitted in pedagogical schools known as *gharānās*, which are important sources of social and stylistic identity, as well as prestige, for musicians. Daniel Neuman has discussed this in depth in his book, *The Life of Music in North India* (1980). Writing about the political nature of *gharānās*, he notes that "a gharana identity provides a shorthand notation for a musician's pedigree, be it a biological or a cultural inheritance or both" (1980: 165). Nowadays, classical musicians celebrate their *gharānā* identity in their biographies on their websites, when introducing themselves in concert and in the liner notes of their CDs.

Ṭhumrī occupies a liminal position with respect to *khyāl gharānās*. Many classical *khyāl* singers do not learn *ṭhumrī* from their principal *guru* or *ustād*, or even from within their own *gharānā*. Rather, they may take great pride in having gone to a semi-classical specialist in order to learn *ṭhumrī*, so as to complement their otherwise classical training. A number of singers with whom I spoke had learnt *ṭhumrī* in this way, normally going to teachers associated with Banaras, the city most associated with the *bol banāo ṭhumrī*; most musicians and music-lovers consider Banaras singers the authority when it comes the *bol banāo ṭhumrī*. Shubhra Guha, although an Agra-*gharānā khyāl* singer, went to D.T. Joshi in order to learn what she calls the "real Banaras

ṭhumrī”. This places *ṭhumrī* in a highly anomalous position in an environment in which learning from multiple teachers, especially from multiple *gharānās*, is often frowned upon.

Amelia Maciszewski notes that some singers claim not to have learnt *ṭhumrī* from a particular teacher at all, but rather to have learnt “by listening”. She reads this as a way in which former courtesans might hide the fact that they may have learnt from their mothers, who were courtesans, in the matrilineal teaching structures of traditional courtesan communities (2001b: 18). It is not only former courtesans who state that they have learnt *ṭhumrī* informally. Bonnie Wade quotes Danielou as recounting that, for example, Faiyaz Khan claimed not to have learned *ṭhumrī* from any particular individual, but had “picked it up by hearing” (1984: 108). It is indicative of the fact that *ṭhumrī* is considered less serious than *khyāl* (and carries less prestige) that musicians feel able to admit that they have learnt the genre merely by listening to other singers. Such a claim in relation to *khyāl* would expose the singer to criticism and risk delegitimising the singer’s performances. (Later in this chapter, I will discuss further reasons why musicians might claim that *ṭhumrī* is not taught in the same rigorous way as *khyāl*.)

In some cases, *ṭhumrī* is transmitted alongside *khyāl* from teacher to pupil as part of the student’s *gharānā*-specific training. My own experience of learning *ṭhumrī* was like this. My teacher, Sunanda Sharma, taught me both the Banaras *gharānā* *khyāl* and *ṭhumrī* styles simultaneously. This reflected her own training: she learnt both *ṭhumrī* and *khyāl* from her teacher, Girija Devi. In her case, however, she learnt *khyāl* before *ṭhumrī*, being told she could only start to sing *ṭhumrī* when she had achieved the requisite emotional maturity. (One of the reasons that Sharma taught me *ṭhumrī* even while I was a relative beginner in learning *khyāl* was that I specifically requested this, since my research was focussed on *ṭhumrī*.) This means of transmission of *ṭhumrī*, alongside *khyāl*, as part of the transmission of *gharānā*-specific knowledge, is particularly likely to occur in the Banaras and Patiala *gharānās*. When this happens, singers are more likely to talk about their *ṭhumrī* style as an important part of their *gharānā* heritage. This is a classicising move, situating *ṭhumrī* alongside *khyāl* as valued, hereditary knowledge. In this respect, the *gharānā* discourse overlaps with elements of the classicality discourse.

When it comes to labelling differences between different styles in *ṭhumrī*, most musicians refer not to different *gharānā* styles, but rather to different “*a g*”s (limbs) of *ṭhumrī* style. Many draw attention to the existence of “*pūrab*” (Eastern) and “*Pa jāb*” *a gs* of *ṭhumrī* style, where the *pūrab a g* has two further subdivisions, associated with Banaras and Lucknow respectively, and the *Pa jāb a g* is associated with Punjab-based singers of the Patiala *gharānā*, most notably Bade Ghulam Ali Khan and Barkat Ali Khan and their pupils and descendents. The *Pa jāb a g ṭhumrī* is characterised by its distinctive, highly ornate style, involving florid ornamentation and the use of *tāns*, mentioned above. (Figure 4.9 is typical example.) Certain musicians and

scholars complicate this description of *ṭhumrī* styles by adding to it further stylistic subdivisions. Occasionally, for example, some musicians also mention a Gaya style, as a further subdivision of *pūrāb a g ṭhumrī*. The *ṭhumrī* singer Kumad Diwan has made this style the subject of a year-long period of research at the Sangeet Natak Akademi (see Diwan accessed 2012).³⁷

Figure 4.9, extract from Khan (2006), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Mīśra Bhairavī*, 00:08 to 00:54.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ C. See CD 2, track 7.



There are a number of flaws in this stereotypical way of describing different *ṭhumrī* styles. Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, normally considered the foremost exponent of the *Pa jāb a g*, himself claimed that the *Pa jāb a g* did not exist, and that he sang *pūrāb a g ṭhumrī* (Manuel 1989: 89). A number of musicians note that the Banaras *a g*, the most prominent branch of *ṭhumrī*, is not stylistically homogenous, but contains a number of different styles. Shubhra Guha, for example describes the Banaras style as “rich”, itself containing two or three different stylistic streams of *ṭhumrī* singing. While modern-day exponents of the Banaras style are easy to find, there are relatively few modern-day exponents of the Lucknow style, and there is no consensus around what constitutes its stylistic characteristics. Most musicians with whom I spoke identified the Lucknow style with Begum Akhtar and her disciples. This, itself, is problematic, since Begum Akhtar’s style is influenced by Patiala *gharānā* (*pūrāb a g*) ornamentation

³⁷ Other rare examples of alternative classification schemes include a Bimal Roy’s classification of *ṭhumrī* into five types, including a Kolkata-based “Lachhao” style (1990: 18-21). Also, very occasionally, I have heard terms such as “*khyāl a g*” or “*tappe a g*” used to describe different styles of *ṭhumrī*, in which the genre appropriates musical characteristics from *khyāl* and *tappa* respectively.

(Manuel 1989: 87 and Hiranand 2005: 107).³⁸ Some musicians mention the *bandiś ṭhumrī* when discussing the stylistic lineage associated with Lucknow. This is also problematic. This refers to the older, now rarely heard form of *ṭhumrī*, which dates from before the development of the *bol banāo ṭhumrī*. It is difficult to hear this as a subdivision of the *pūrāb āg*, since the Banaras and Punjab versions of the *bol banāo ṭhumrī* have much more in common with each other than either does with the *bandiś ṭhumrī*.

The stereotypical categorisation of *ṭhumrī* styles also neglects the *ṭhumrī* of the Kirana *gharānā*. Abdul Karim Khan's *ṭhumrīs* have long been popular amongst music lovers. Manuel notes that he "popularized a distinctive approach to *ṭhumrī* singing that was widely imitated" (1989: 86). His pupil's pupil, Bhimsen Joshi, sang much of the same repertoire as he did, with similar stylistic characteristics. As noted above, Kirana *gharānā ṭhumrī* is characterised by an unorthodox use of *tāns* and *sargām* which, although it invites criticism, nevertheless distinguishes it from other branches of *ṭhumrī* style. Thus in a review of a concert by Krishna Hangal, daughter of Gangubai Hangal and another member of the Kirana *gharānā*, Batuk Dewanji celebrates her use of the "pleasing *taans* typical of the Kirana *gharana*" in her *ṭhumrī* performance (*Times of India*, 18th March 1989).

The stylistic connection between Bhimsen Joshi and Abdul Karim Khan is particularly pronounced: as well as singing many of the *ṭhumrīs* which Abdul Karim Khan recorded, Joshi also utilised some of the same *rāg*-specific stock expressions as Khan. Note the similarity of the opening of the two passages transcribed in figures 4.5 and 4.7. There are other similarities between recordings by Abdul Karim Khan and Bhimsen Joshi. Note the similar start of the two passages of *sārgam* in figure 4.10 and 4.11, which come from recordings of the *ṭhumrī* "*Sajan tum kahe ko neha lagaye*" by Khan and Joshi respectively. The extracts in figures 4.12 and 4.13 display a different kind of similarity. Here, though from recordings of different compositions and in different *rāgs*, they both consist of successively transposed versions of a figure that falls by a third, starting on . (I have marked them with brackets above the staff.) Here, it is not only the 3²1 gesture which is shared in both performances, but also the transposition strategy through which successive versions of this gesture are realised.

³⁸ This is perhaps the reason why Vamanrao Deshpande, describing differences between the "Lucknow *baj*" and the "Banarsi *baj*" of *ṭhumrī*, writes that the Lucknow style incorporated Punjabi aspects (1987: 180).

Figure 4.10, extract from Khan (2003a), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Tila g*, 02:12 to 02:56.

Tāl = *kaharvā*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ F#. See CD 2, track 8.

pa— pama gama pa gama ga pa— pa ga ma— pama gasa gama ga gama pa ma

ma ni pa ma ga ma pa sa ni pa ga pa ni ni pa ma ga ma pa pa ma ga sa ga pa

ni ni pa ma ga ma pa ma ga ma ga sa ni sa ni pa ni sa ga sa ga ma pa ga ma ni pa sa ni sa ni

pa pa nipama gama pa ni ni nipama gama pa ni li pa magama pa ni— sa la— sani sa sani sanipani

sa pa ni sa ni pa ni pa ma ga ma ga sa ka— he ko ne - ha la - gaye

Figure 4.11, extract from Joshi (2002a), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Tila g*, 09:23 to 10:05.

Tāl = *tīntāl*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ C#. See CD 2, track 9.

gaye pa— pa pama gama pa pa gama ga pa— pama ga ma pa ma ga sa ga ma ga

gama pa ma gama ni pama gama pa ni lipama gama pa ni— li li li li sa sa sa

sa ni pa ni sa ni pa ni pa ma ga ma ga sa sa - ja - na tu - ma ka -

- he— ko— ne - ha— la - ga - ye

Figure 4.12, extract from Khan (2003c), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Bhairavī*, 00:24 to 00:35.

Tāl = *kaharvā*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ F. See CD 2, track 10.



Figure 4.13, extract from Joshi (2002b), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Kāṣṭhī*, 04:18 to 04:25.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ E. See CD 2, track 11.



Bhimsen Joshi learned from Sawai Gandharva, Abdul Karim Khan's pupil, but not from Khan himself. It is possible that these similarities are the result of the transmission of formulas from teacher to pupil over two generations. It is also possible that Bhimsen Joshi picked up these formulas by listening to Khan's recordings. In interview he has spoken of being "captivated" by them at a young age (*Times of India*, 12th November 1987). Either way, the similarities between Kirana *gharānā* singers' approaches to *ṭhumrī* render their performances manifestations of a distinct branch of *ṭhumrī* style. Their *ṭhumrī* performances are popular amongst audiences: Abdul Karim Khan's recordings, for instance, are renowned as some of the greatest examples of *ṭhumrī* in the twentieth century. The existence of this distinctive branch of *ṭhumrī* style, long enjoyed by *ṭhumrī*'s audiences, further undermines the stereotypical divisions of *ṭhumrī* into *pūrāb* and *Pa jāb a gs*.

The stylistic family trees implied by the stereotypical description of *ṭhumrī* styles mirror the *gharānās* of *khyāl* (and the *bānīs* of *dhrupad*). They would appear to be informed by the ideology of *gharānā* that is ubiquitous in descriptions of North Indian classical music. In fact, a number of scholars go as far as describing the different styles of *ṭhumrī* as "*gharānās*" (see for example Purohit 1990:69, Banerjee 1986: 4 and Pohankar 2009: 20-29). This is in contrast with the more mainstream view that only *khyāl* may be transmitted in *gharānās* (see for example Deshpande 1987: 29). I would like to suggest that one of the reasons the stereotypical classification of *ṭhumrī* styles has persisted in the way in which most musicians talk about *ṭhumrī*, despite its inaccuracies, is that it satisfies the need for a genre to have distinct pedagogical schools and styles, each associated with different regions and transmitted from one

generation of singers to the next, a requirement which is tied up with ideas about classicality in North Indian classical music.³⁹

The interaction between a *gharānā* discourse in North Indian classical music and ideas about classicality in *thumrī* also informs discussions of the Banaras *gharānā*, the *gharānā* most associated with *thumrī* and the one to which my teacher belongs. The discussions surrounding the Banaras *gharānā* exemplify the variety of the different social agendas that come to bear in considerations of the relationship between *thumrī* and *gharānā*. It illustrates Daniel Neuman's point, in a discussion of different disputes over different *gharānās*, that "controversy regarding what is and what is not a gharana and who is and is not a member is still common and in many respects is political" (1980: 161). Members of the Banaras *gharānā*, including my teacher and also Rajan and Sajan Mishra, insist that it is a *gharānā* like any other. It fulfils many of the criteria for a pedagogical lineage's being able to be called a *gharānā* that are suggested by Deshpande (1973: 10-17) and discussed by Neuman (1980: 148, 155-160). One of these, for example, is a requirement that a *gharānā* involve at least three generations; Rajan and Sajan Mishra insist that their stylistic lineage involves at least six generations of their own family. In spite of this, however, the Banaras *gharānā* is excluded from most lists of *khyāl gharānās*. It is often associated more with *thumrī* and semi-classical genres than with *khyāl*; there is widespread acknowledgement of Banaras singers' expertise in *thumrī*. Banaras-based singers are often also associated with the courtesan tradition. Deepak Raja, for example, takes an outspoken approach, suggesting that "the term '*gharana*' is... inappropriate in this context", since "the so-called Benares gharana is an entire culture that revolved around the salons of the courtesans supported by the aristocracy of the region during the 18th and 19th centuries" and does not describe "stylistic continuity over several generations of a well-defined lineage of tutelage" (2007). This position is echoed even by some Banaras musicians themselves (Maciszewski 2001b: 3).

In this context, Rajan and Sajan Mishra's decision not to sing *thumrī* serves not only as an assertion that there is a Banaras *gharānā khyāl* style in danger of being neglected; it also helps them to make the case that the Banaras *gharānā* is a *gharānā* at all. This also serves partially to validate the argument that *thumrī* does not count as real *gharānā* knowledge, contrary, for example, to statements by my teacher that it does. (Rajan and Sajan Mishra, however, always show the utmost respect and admiration for their *thumrī*-singing colleagues.)

There are, however, advantages to being a member of a group of musicians primarily associated with *thumrī*. The idea that Banaras *gharānā thumrī* is "pure *thumrī*" gives Banaras *gharānā*

³⁹ Richard Widdess (personal communication, 2012) has noted that some singers make the argument that *khyāl* is "richer" than and therefore superior to *dhrupad* because it has different stylistic schools, denying the existence of stylistic distinctions between *dhrupad* singers. In this discursive context, stylistic richness itself can be a source of prestige for a genre.

singers a near-monopoly on the teaching of the genre (with a few exceptions, such as Ajoy Chakraborty of the Patiala *gharānā*, who is sought after as a teacher of both *khyāl* and *thumrī*). Amongst musicians whom I interviewed, many took pride in having learned Banaras *thumrī* from teachers other than their primary *guru* or *ustād*. Thus Shubhra Guha stated that she had learnt “the real Banaras *thumrī*” from Pandit D.T. Joshi, but learnt *khyāl* elsewhere, and Tulika Ghosh noted that she had learnt *thumrī* and *tappā* from Hanuman Prasad Mishra, of the Banaras *gharānā*. Being able to claim a Banaras heritage for one’s *thumrī* style is valuable in an environment in which connoisseurs criticise other *thumrī* styles (for example that of the Kirana *gharānā*) as lacking authenticity.

These different, strategic conceptions of the relationship between *thumrī* and *gharānā* have a variety of musical consequences. Singers who stress the *gharānā*-like transmission of *thumrī* are likely to display greater stylistic conservatism than those whose training in semi-classical genres is not central to their public identity as singers. For the former group, their training is an important source of prestige. Any musical deviations from the style they claim to have learnt would undermine the public musical identity they are attempting to project. On the other hand, singers who claim to have learnt by listening to recordings, or perhaps from teachers outside their *gharānā*, or who have made a name for themselves primarily by singing *khyāl*, may exercise greater stylistic freedom.

Devotional discourse

Musicians and musicologists frequently talk about a relationship between North Indian classical music and religious devotion. This idea came up in almost all of my discussions with musicians; it seems that there is barely a musician who does not consider this important. It also informs musicians’ behaviour on stage in performances, as well as CD liner notes and concert reviews. Thus Shubhra Guha remarked that “Indian classical music is meant for spiritualism. So ultimately our motto is to feel god. So I try to feel god, feel that unseen power. I try to feel through music” (2010, personal communication). Ravi Shankar believes that this is what renders Indian classical music distinctive, saying that “The difference between our music and western classical music is the spiritual quality of our music” (*Times of India*, July 23rd 1995). Likewise Prabha Atre devotes a chapter of her memoir, *Along the Path of Music* (2005), to the subject of “Music and Bliss”. She also discusses the connection some audiences in America draw between Indian classical music and yoga. Daniel Neuman has noted that this idea informs the way in which musicians might frame their performances, in what he calls a “*bhakti* [devotion] model” of performance. In such performances, he writes, “The performer, ... addresses himself to God, raising his hands in supplication as he sings his devotion. He wears no costume, but the ordinary everyday dress of the loosely fitting shirt (*kurtā*) and loose slacks (*pajāmās*)” (1980: 222). Great musicians of the past are often characterised as ascetics, who live

only for music as a way of expressing religious devotion and who do not desire luxuries or fame (see for example Bose 1990: 26-27). Sometimes musicians talk of supernatural occurrences, such as being visited by gods, saints or their own dead teachers during particularly intense times of practice (Devi 2000: 16). Rita Ganguly describes both herself and Bismillah Khan as having had such “spiritual experiences in the course of learning and practising music” (1994: 61-69). The discursive connection between Indian classical music and religious devotion was not entirely new in the twentieth century. However, its modern-day formulation is the result of a transformation, inflected by the Hindu nationalist rhetoric of the music reformers as well as the New Age spirituality that came into prominence in Indian music’s encounter with Western audiences in the 1960s.

When it comes to the discussion of spirituality in relation to *ṭhumrī*, specifically, musicians take a variety of positions. Some explicitly contrast the devotional nature of classical genres with what they feel is the more worldly nature of *ṭhumrī*. Deva, for example, writes, “Of course, not all music is ‘contemplative’ of the Force of Existence. The sensate value in human experience is not taboo in good art; and they find expression in the lyrical songs of *thumri*, *tappa*, and *javali*” (1973: 78). However this is not the only way in which the discourse of religious devotion comes into play in descriptions of *ṭhumrī*. In contrast with this position, other commentators and singers have been keen to assert the spirituality of *ṭhumrī*. In Peter Manuel’s description of the transformation of *ṭhumrī* early in the twentieth century, he notes that one strategy singers adopted to increase the genre’s respectability was to encourage audiences to interpret *ṭhumrī*’s amorous lyrics as devotional, thus minimising any association with courtesans. Lalita du Perron has made a similar point, showing ways in which certain musicians altered the lyrics of some *ṭhumrīs* so as to remove any obviously erotic references and thereby emphasise devotional interpretations of *ṭhumrī*. Although there had long been an association in various strands of Indian philosophy and aesthetics between religious devotion and passion for a human beloved, this constituted a shift in emphasis, in which singers increasingly focussed audiences’ attention exclusively on devotional interpretations of *ṭhumrī*. In this context, arguing (strategically) that *ṭhumrī*’s themes are predominantly devotional serves as a tool for enhancing the respectability of the genre.

A devotional theme has persisted in descriptions of *ṭhumrī* up until the present day. Sunil Bose emphasises this of *ṭhumrī* in his book, *Indian Classical Music: Essence and Emotions*. There, he characterises *ṭhumrī* as “the soul of Hindustani music” and describes its subject matter as the portrayal of “divine love as a means of spiritual emancipation” (1990: 52-53). A devotional discourse about *ṭhumrī* informs some versions of the genre’s history that musicians tell, including when they claim that *ṭhumrī* originated as ritual music performed in temples (Deshpande 1987: 180). It also informs the way in which Banaras-based musicians formulate

the connection between *thumrī* and Banaras: by stressing the spiritual nature of the city, they are able also to claim that the musical genre associated with that city is primarily devotional in nature. In the biography of her mother, the singer Siddheshwari Devi, Savita Devi stresses her mother's personal spirituality and that of her *thumrī* renditions. She attributes this to her connection with Banaras, writing that "Banaras was her true home, the arena of her activity, and the spirit of her life", continuing, "Her music, spirituality, love for the common people, and a spirit of renunciation were the qualities of Banaras itself" (2000: 21). My teacher, too, talks nostalgically about the time when she used to live in Banaras, studying *thumrī* and *khyāl* with Girija Devi, describing it as a particularly spiritual city.

The devotional discourse about *thumrī* (and about North Indian classical music more generally) informs performances of *thumrī* in a variety of ways. I have already mentioned Daniel Neuman's discussions of the meanings of musicians' behaviour on stage, in which he identifies what he calls a "*bhakti* model" of performance. By framing performances through certain kinds of on-stage behaviour and dress, as well as with the statements that they make before and after they sing, musicians can encourage audiences to hear a devotional significance in diverse musical features and in a variety of musical genres. (As Lalita du Perron (2002, 2007) has pointed out, a strategic re-framing of *thumrī* has allowed musicians to claim a primarily devotional significance even for *thumrī*, the courtesans' genre *par excellence*.) However, in the case of *thumrī*, a devotional discourse is not merely manifested in the way in which musicians frame their performances; it also influences the musical content of those performances.

In performance, musicians sometimes evoke a devotional atmosphere by closing their eyes and pausing on a particular note. In his foreword to Savita Devi's autobiography of Siddheshwari Devi, Baldeo Sahai draws attention to this particular gesture as a way of claiming the spirituality of North Indian classical music. He writes, "The Indian singer often closes his her eyes and seems to take a dip in the ocean of Self in prayerful ecstasy" (2000: 9). Likewise, Tulika Ghosh commented on when she might close her eyes in performance. After stressing that she enjoys making eye contact with her audience for most of her performances, she said that she would close her eyes "when it comes to that portion of your exposition where it has a meditative quality". She continued that when the singer "[goes] into that meditation" then the "audience is always uplifted". Not all musical features afford this particular gesture: more often than not, musicians close their eyes when singing long, held notes in the upper register, particularly . In the creation of a devotional ethos in performance, some musical features take priority over others. I will discuss other specific examples of devotional-sounding musical features in *thumrī* in the next chapter, where I focus on the connotations which particular features evoke for my singing teacher, Sunanda Sharma.

Golden Age discourse

In discussions of North Indian classical music, musicians and especially music-lovers often refer nostalgically to a time in the past, when great musicians performed music that would dwarf the offerings of their modern-day descendents, when audiences were small and consisted solely of knowledgeable connoisseurs, and when musicians were highly respected. Daniel Neuman captures aspects of this historical fantasy in the following evocative passage:

The remembered past which contemporary musicians evoke is not the immediate past but a world that to the modern sensibility seems like something from the Arabian Nights. It was a world in which the nobility were men of high learning and deep sensitivity; men who apprenticed themselves to their own musicians and called them masters, where music contests could destroy in a single night a reputation built over four decades of hard work, and award to the victor his weight in gold and jewels. This was a world where musicians practiced unceasingly until practice itself became a form of worship and its own objective, where listeners were a rare and delicate species, having the leisure to cultivate an art from early youth, to mature with age into true connoisseurs; a world, in short, where musicians of excellence flourished, being, as they were, measured only by listeners of excellence (1980: 21).

This historical fantasy appeals especially to music connoisseurs: most of the self-identified connoisseurs with whom I spoke told me some version of it. It informs the marketing of CDs as “rare” recordings, for example in the “Golden Milestones” series of recordings from the early twentieth century recently released by Saregama, in which all of the CDs are labelled “Rare Collection”. Musicians take up aspects of this narrative when then talk with humility about their teachers and their teachers’ teachers, expressing doubt about their own ability to live up to long-dead “greats” of North Indian classical music.

Both musicians and music-lovers often express longing for older performance contexts, describing with a sense of nostalgia the intimate atmosphere of performances in the past and celebrating the expert musical knowledge of some of Indian classical music’s former, high-status patrons. Nowadays, although most Indian classical music events occur in the public concert hall, some small gatherings continue to occur, sometimes, as in time gone by, in the private houses of wealthy music lovers. Musicians often told me that they like, most of all, to perform at *baithaks*, small, seated gatherings at which musicians perform to a small number of music connoisseurs, often organised by invitation rather than by advertisement. They draw attention to the fact that in those circumstances they can engage more fully with the audience, making eye contact with them as well as being aware of their facial expressions and their sounds of appreciation throughout the performance. Tulika Ghosh, for example, told me, “I think the best concerts of mine have always been in the *baithaks*, the small gatherings.” She attributed this to “the intimacy which you share with the audience” and “the fantastic eye contact which helps you come out with your best”. Mohan Nadkarni laments what he considers to be the

increasing rarity of small performance gatherings, which, he believes, threatens to “hasten the ... decline of the thumri tradition”. He writes,

It is important to note that the thumri, as a song-form, had its heyday during the period of compact, intimate and informal *baithaks*. The singer would be inspired by the warmth of such intimate gatherings, comprising discerning listeners, who would understand and appreciate all the subtle nuances of a musical theme and encourage the artists to give of his or her best. Where do we now have such *mehfils* or *baithaks*? (1990: 45).

This idea is behind the popular “VSK Baithaks” that occur periodically in Delhi. There, large audiences sit on the floor in public auditoria and other large halls, listening to concerts given by musicians which the organiser himself has often personally hand-picked. These concerts often last until the small hours of the morning. Both musicians and audiences who are present speak of their happiness at being in an unusual concentration of connoisseurs. On the website dedicated to this concert series, the organiser describes it as follows:

For me, listening to live music in the Baithak format - sitting on the floor, right in the front and in close proximity to artiste is so much more than an aural experience. It is a huge emotional experience; and occasionally a near spiritual experience. But absolutely, and thankfully, never an intellectual experience. And what is more that it is an experience of joy that I find is so much enhanced when I am able to share it with other similarly disposed Rasiks (Kapur accessed 2012).

Only very occasionally do musicians and music-lovers note the disadvantages of Indian classical music’s past performance contexts. Karnani (1976: 1-2), for example, has noted the difficulty for musicians in the past of having to cater to the every whim of arbitrary, even ignorant patrons. His description echoes the rhetoric of the music reformers, who justified their stance that classical music needed saving by lamenting the current situation of Indian classical music (see Bakhle 2005). Despite these remarks by Karnani, such negative views about music of that period have, for the most part, disappeared from the discursive landscape of North Indian classical music.

When talking about *thumrī* in particular, musicians and music-lovers invoke a particular version of the Golden Age discourse. This often involves discussion of the courtesans who used to sing *thumrī* and of its prior association with dance and with the court of Wajid Ali Shah at Lucknow. This aspect of the discourse about *thumrī* is enhanced by the popularity of portrayals of courtesans in Hindi films (see Mehta 1990: 82 and Booth 2007). In many versions of the Golden Age narrative about *thumrī*, the genre is cast as sensuous song of courtesans and the archetypal historical performance context for *thumrī* is imagined to be the courtesans’ salon.

Regula Qureshi (2001) draws attention to nostalgia for previous performance contexts as instrumental in the success of Begum Akhtar amongst upper-middle-class audiences. In Akhtar’s case, being of courtesan background seemed to be an advantage. This is contrary to the point that Manuel and Perron make when they claim that singers’ attempts to distance

themselves from the any association with the courtesan tradition have been crucial in ensuring the survival of *thumrī*: here, capitalising on music-lovers' nostalgia for courtesans can become part of a strategy to ensure one's popularity and continued employment. (Qureshi does note, however, that Begum Akhtar took great pains to emphasise her status as a respectable, married woman. Akhtar is also an exceptional case, as one of the most well-known singers of the twentieth century.)

Some singers (normally "semi-classical specialists") mention *thumrī*'s past performance contexts when they introduce *thumrī* in concert, evoking nostalgia for the now-disappeared courtesan tradition. Rekha Surya, for example, introduced a performance of *thumrī* and *dādrā* which I attended in New Delhi in 2010 by talking about the genre's past association with courtesans. Likewise, in an article of hers published on her website, she celebrates the "role of the courtesan in developing [the] genre", noting that it "asserts a strong feminine identity in folk poetry laden with unabashed sensuality" (Surya accessed 2012). As a student of Begum Akhtar who, herself, does not come from a courtesan background she is able to capitalise on the association between *thumrī* and courtesans and on the nostalgia it evokes, without any threat to her own personal respectability.

In performance, musicians often try to evoke an older, more intimate performance atmosphere, even within a large concert hall. They might do this by making frequent eye-contact with particular audience members, taking their requests for encores towards the end of a performance, or acknowledging senior musicians when they arrive. Assuming a knowledgeable audience, they may also make use of wit, perhaps by adding in unexpected lyrics, appropriate to the events currently occurring in the concert hall. Similarly, performances of "rare" material (perhaps an old, "rare" composition which the performer claims to have learned from his or her teacher) also assume an audience of connoisseurs.

Certain musical strategies also afford more easily the creation of an atmosphere of intimacy and engagement between musician and audience. One way of creating such an atmosphere in the context of *thumrī* is to avoid demonstrations of speed and virtuosity, which many musicians and connoisseurs frown upon in *thumrī* as inappropriate for the genre and often associate with the attempt to please large crowds. Manuel quotes the singer Rita Gangoly talking at length on this issue. She suggests that changes in patronage have resulted in a situation in which "some acrobatics are expected" in *thumrī* performances, drawing attention in particular to her use of *tāns* as an example of this. She believes that although "our music is essentially chamber music" and "the entire audience should be under the tip of one's finger", this is "just not possible with a big audience", with the result that the singer must perform vocal acrobatics, in order to impress large audiences of non-connoisseurs (1989: 93-94). Deshpande tells a similar story about the effects of changing patronage, this time criticising what he feels is an increasing over-emphasis

on virtuosity in both *ṭhumrī* and *khyāl*. He writes of the increasing size and diminishing expertise of audiences over the course of the twentieth century, which have caused musicians to employ “pyrotechnics”, in order to “pander to the low taste of the masses” (1987 [1973]: 181).⁴⁰ When I spoke to semi-classical singer Rekha Surya, she too was critical of singers who attempt to “dazzle” audiences with “flashy” technical displays, noting their inappropriateness in the context of *ṭhumrī*. Many other singers, including for example my teacher, stress the inappropriateness of *tāns* and other shows of virtuosity in *ṭhumrī*, noting that it hampers the emotional expressiveness of the genre.⁴¹ By drawing on a discursive link between virtuosity and attempts to please large crowds of ignorant listeners (even if this relies on an inaccurate historical narrative) and then avoiding any overt shows of virtuosity in their own *ṭhumrī* performances, singers can present a style of *ṭhumrī* that appears to hark back to a former time (albeit an imagined one) and affords a particular kind of connoisseurship.

Many of the typical musical characteristics of *bol banāo ṭhumrī* render it particularly suited to evoking intimate performance environments such as the courtesans’ salon. Manuel notes that the process of *bol banāo* itself emerged in the *mehfil* as a result of the demands of that particular performance environment (1989: 132-134): musicians talk nostalgically of performance environments of the past when they explain that they prefer to sing *ṭhumrī* to small audiences than to large audiences in concert halls. The subtle and nuanced signification of *bol banāo*, discussed in the previous chapter, rewards close attention; to be able to de-code *ṭhumrī*’s meanings requires a degree of expert knowledge. These characteristics make the genre a well-suited object for connoisseurship.

Other musical features also allow musicians to cultivate a connoisseur-oriented *ṭhumrī* style. Evoking ideas about the intimacy between musicians and audiences in past performance contexts, musicians may also choose to use those particular musical strategies, for example, which are most likely to produce audible responses from the audience; they may also make a point of responding musically to the audience during the performance. Figures 4.14 and 4.21 are extracts from Bhimsen Joshi’s recording of the famous *ṭhumrī* “*Bābul morā*”. The audience in this recording are particularly vocal in their praise of Joshi’s performance as it occurs: it is therefore a useful recording to analyse as evidence of the kinds of musical features which

⁴⁰ The idea that *tāns* and other virtuosic features in *ṭhumrī* are a novel and inappropriate response to the emergence of larger, less knowledgeable audiences than before is widespread amongst musicians. However, a study of recordings from throughout the twentieth century does not support this historical narrative. The earliest *ṭhumrī* recordings contain numerous virtuosic *tān* passages. It would seem that *tāns* did not first appear in *ṭhumrī* as a result of its move to the concert hall; rather, *tāns* had always been a part of *ṭhumrī* style. As Manuel notes, *tāns* only ceased appearing in *ṭhumrī* performances when certain Banaras-based *ṭhumrī* singers started developing the leisurely *bol banāo ṭhumrī*: the generally critical attitude towards using *tāns* in *ṭhumrī* which many singers and music-lovers now adopt is evidence of the authority which has become attached to *pūrāb a g ṭhumrī*, over and above other styles.

⁴¹ I have already noted the criticism which Kirana and Patiala *gharānā* singers face as a result of their use of florid, virtuosic passages in *ṭhumrī*.

music-lovers enjoy in *ṭhumrī* and of the ways in which a performer might respond musically to audience feedback.

Towards the end of the recording, one particular musical fragment provokes an especially strong reaction from the audience. It consists of a pause on N, oscillating with ornamental touches of D, then moving down to Ḍ, setting the lyrics “*ye bābul*” (or “*le bābul*”). See figure 4.14, where it occurs at V: 4, W: 1, W: 2 and W: 4. Immediately after its first occurrence (in V: 3 to V:4), a couple of audience member express their appreciation for what had just occurred, one twice saying “*Kyā bat hai!*” (a typical exclamation of praise meaning “What a thing this is!”). Joshi then sings a number of short phrase-units, all ending with versions of that same melodic fragment. I have marked particular enthusiastic reactions of praise from the audience with square brackets about the staff. After the end of the extract transcribed in 4.14, Joshi goes on to sing a number of *tāns*, all ending with the distinctive “*le bābul*” figure, to the continuing delight of his audience. Here it is reasonable to assume that the positive feedback from the audience was one factor which provoked Joshi to continue to use this figure at the ends of successive phrases. This produces an example of what I call an “end-rhyme strategy” and points to a further reason why singers might want to use what I call “successive variation strategies” in their *ṭhumrī* performances (see Chapter 2): successive variation strategies provide a framework within which musicians can repeat musical figures which their audiences have enjoyed, in order to continue to please their listeners, while also avoiding the boredom of repeating whole phrases verbatim.⁴²

⁴² Qureshi has analysed interactions between performer and audience in the context of *qawwali* (1987).

Figure 4.14, extract from Joshi (2001), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Bhairavī*, 07:20 to 08:15.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ E. See CD 2, track 12.

Something similar seems to occur in Badi Moti Bai's performance of the *ṭhumrī* "Nāhaka lāe gavanavā" (n.d.). Here, she unexpectedly introduces *tivra* M in a descending scalar passage immediately before singing the *mukhṛā* at E: 2, in the extract shown in 4.15. *Tivra* M is a deviation (albeit a common one) from the pitches normally associated with the *rāg* of the composition, *rāg Bhairavī*. This immediately provokes an audible, positive reaction from the audience, which I have marked with a square bracket above the staff. She goes on use *tivra* M in a similar fashion repeatedly throughout the performance, as shown in the examples in figures 4.16, 4.17, 4.18, 4.19 and 4.20.

Figure 4.15, extract from Badi Moti Bai (n.d.), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Bhairavī*, 01:35 to 01:47.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ F#. See CD 2, track 13.

Figure 4.16, extract from Badi Moti Bai (n.d.), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Bhairavī*, 02:34 to 02:44.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ F#. See CD 2, track 14.

Figure 4.17, extract from Badi Moti Bai (n.d.), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Bhairavī*, 03:33 to 03:44.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ F#. See CD 2, track 15.



Figure 4.18, extract from Badi Moti Bai (n.d.), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Bhairavī*, 04:41 to 04:53.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ F#. See CD 2, track 16.



Figure 4.19, extract from Badi Moti Bai (n.d.), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Bhairavī*, 07:57 to 08:01.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ F#. See CD 2, track 17.

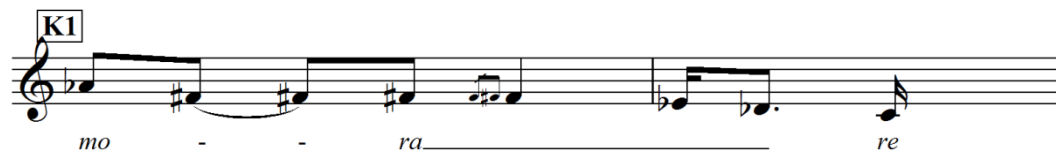


Figure 4.20, extract from Badi Moti Bai (n.d.), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Bhairavī*, 10:58 to 11:04.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ F#. See CD 2, track 18.



It is impossible to know Badi Moti Bai's motivations for using this formulaic musical strategy so many times in this performance. It is possible that she would have repeated it this frequently anyway, regardless of the audience reaction it provoked.⁴³ However, whether or not Badi Moti Bai repeats this formula as a response to the initial praise from her audience, it is nevertheless a

⁴³ It would be useful to compare this with other performances of hers of this composition, or at least others in *rāg Bhairavī*, unfortunately these are hard to come by.

good example of the kind of musical strategy that would appeal to listeners who consider themselves connoisseurs. If a listener is to understand the significance of deviations from the *rāg* being performed, it does not only require that the listener pay close attention to what is being sung; it also requires that the listener have knowledge of that *rāg*. (This particular musical strategy, and the connoisseurship it affords, is specific to semi-classical genres, since it exploits the freedom with respect to *rāg* that is permitted there but not in other genres.)

Likewise a significant degree of expert knowledge is required for listeners to appreciate musicians' skill not only in altering individual notes of the *rāg* they are performing, but in suggesting foreign *rāgs*: in this case, the listener must have knowledge both of the *rāg* of the composition and of the other *rāg* which is temporarily also suggested. Later on in his performance of “*Bābula morā*” discussed above, Bhimsen Joshi departs from *rāg Bhairavī* in an extended passage in which he suggests the classical *rāg Lalit*. His audience shows great appreciation not only for the way in which he departs from *rāg Bhairavī* (starting at A1: 3, where they react immediately to Joshi's introduction of *tivra* M) but also for the way in which he returns to *rāg Bhairavī*, in C1: 2. Joshi's performance affords his audience the opportunity not only to delight in his skill in manipulating *rāg*, but also to display to each other their own expertise in the recognition of that skill.

Figure 4.21, extract from Joshi (2001), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Bhairavī*, 09:12 to 10:06.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ E. See CD 2, track 19.

The musical score consists of five staves of music, each with a label in a box: A1, B1, C1, D1, and E1. The lyrics are written in Devanagari script below the notes. The score is divided into sections A1, B1, C1, and D1. The lyrics are: A1: māī ca-lī pī-yā pī-yā ke deś māī ca-lī; B1: pī-yā ke de-śa; C1: māī ca-lī māī ca-lī pī-yā; D1: ke de-śa a re bā-bul mo - - rā; E1: nai - ha - ra chū - ṭo hī jāe.

By glorifying and romanticising North Indian classical music's past, certain versions of the Golden Age discourse about North Indian classical music imply that recent musical developments constitute a form of decline. Some musicians and music-lovers say this explicitly

(see Nadkarni, above, and the Introduction to this thesis). For musicians, this historical narrative has its drawbacks. A strategic disadvantage inherent in telling this story about North Indian classical music is that it risks de-legitimising one's own musical talents: it is difficult to sell one's performances as worthy of attention if one also describes them as the end result of a period of musical decline. For *ṭhumrī* singers, reinforcing the link between their music and the historical courtesan tradition comes with the risk that audiences might consider their performances less musically serious than those of classical genres. Worse still, it raises the possibility that audiences might start to wonder about the singers' own personal backgrounds, particularly in the case of female musicians, perhaps guessing whether they are courtesans or descended from courtesans. Nevertheless various singers continue to evoke a Golden Age discourse in various ways, capitalising on the power of nostalgia to sell records and attract audiences to their performances. Also, in a situation in which music connoisseurs control access to performing opportunities, there is considerable social pressure on musicians not to disagree with them too strongly about the nature and history of North Indian classical music.

Emotional discourse

In the last chapter, I discussed the importance many musicians and listeners place on emotional authenticity in the performance of *ṭhumrī* and on the idea that the musical content of *ṭhumrī* should in some way reflect the emotions implied by the lyrics. This forms part of a wider discourse about *ṭhumrī* and emotions, in which *ṭhumrī*'s value is located primarily in its emotional appeal. For those who take this stance, *ṭhumrī* emotional character is its unique selling point, something which renders it both more beautiful and also more difficult than *khyāl*.

My teacher, for example, often emphasises the emotionally expressive nature of *ṭhumrī*. She believes that this is part of what makes singing *ṭhumrī* more demanding than singing *khyāl*. She told me, for example, that one must first master *śāstriya sangīt*, that is, classical music, in the form of *khyāl*, before one can even begin to sing *ṭhumrī*, but that singing *ṭhumrī* requires something else even in addition to this. Talking about *ṭhumrī*, she said, “*śāstriya sangīt* gives you the language. After, when you start doing poetry, when you sing your emotions, it's not only *śāstra* – it's beyond *śāstra*.” This statement echoes the arguments of *ṭhumrī*'s advocates from throughout the twentieth century. In 1925, Dilip Kumar Roy argued that “the real glory of Thumri lies in its taking cognizance of the subtle shades of evanescent emotions that succeed one after the other in the musical experiences of the artist”. Pointing to *ṭhumrī*'s especially emotional nature, “the delicacy of its nuances” and “the ardour and warmth of its living appeal” allowed Roy to argue that *ṭhumrī* deserved to continue to exist alongside *khyāl* and *dhrupad*, even though it does not adhere to the rules of *rāg* as strictly as they do (1990 [1925]: 30). Vamanrao Deshpande, likewise, presents *ṭhumrī*'s emotional character as the feature that allows it to sit alongside *khyāl* as one of the “two parts of classicism, one redeeming itself in the

puristic musical experience as an end in itself [*khyāl*] while the other aimed at giving expression to various emotional or the sensuous sides of human existence [*thumrī*]" (1987 [1973]: 180). Others describe *thumrī* as a *bhāv-pradhān* (or emotion-focussed) genre. Tulika Ghosh remarked that "*thumrī* singing is far more expressive [than *khyāl*] because *thumrī* means *bhāv-pradhān*: without *bhāv*, there is no *thumrī*" (2011, personal communication).

The idea that *thumrī* is a natural, authentic outpouring of emotion is sometimes manifested in statements about the training and experience required in order to be able to sing *thumrī*. In contrast with the statements I identified above as part of the classicality and *gharānā* discourses surrounding *thumrī*, musicians may stress *thumrī*'s emotional nature by suggesting that it cannot or does not need to be taught in the same rigorous manner as *khyāl*. When talking about the history of the *thumrī*, "*Itnī araja morī mān*", for example, my teacher states that it was written by a simple woman, hailing from Banaras, who had no musical training but who was heartbroken following a misunderstanding with her husband. While Shubhra Guha herself stresses that she studied *thumrī* from a single *guru*, she does not believe that her *guru* studied *thumrī* in the same way. She said, "He was very close to Siddheshwari-ji [Siddheshwari Devi]. ... And he was a very natural singer. He had *thumrī* in his spirit so naturally. ... He has not taken a very rigorous *talīm* from anybody. No, he was a very natural singer, very authentic" (2010, personal communication). Chaitanya Desai makes a virtue of the fact that *thumrī* is often not taught in the same way as *khyāl*. He writes, "The singing of Thumri is more difficult than singing of Khayal, because vocal gymnastics and mathematical permutations and combinations could help to go a long way for rendering a Khyal, but these exercises will not help one to proceed even for a short time in singing of Thumri. ... Thumri ... is not a thing to be taught: 'Bol' is the soul of Thumri music and one can create beautiful Bols only out of one's own experience and inspiration" (1990: 7).

Related to the idea *thumrī* is a natural, untrained expression of emotion are ideas about the universal appeal of *thumrī* and Indian classical music. Prabha Atre believes that, in her performances in North America, "the non-Indian listeners do sense the emotions which underlie the words", since "they experience them through music". She tells a story that demonstrates this:

Once when I saw that the listeners were mostly Indians, I had begun and ended my concert without bothering to give any explanatory introduction. After I had concluded with *Bhairavi*, a very elderly American lady came to me and asked, 'Didn't the piece that you sang at the end express longing?' Even without understanding the words she was able to pick up unmistakably the feelings expressed through the notes (2005: 80).

In Saussurean semiotic terms, Atre is here constructing the emotional signifieds of her performance as "highly motivated", as discussed in the previous chapter. This view of *thumrī* contradicts aspects of the Golden Age discourse, particularly the idea that *thumrī* is a genre that

can only successfully be de-coded by connoisseurs. Thus different discourses about *ṭhumrī* produce different ideas about the way in which *ṭhumrī* signifies emotion, implying two contradictory positions on the extent to which *ṭhumrī*'s musical signs of emotion are “motivated” by their objects.

Certain musical features are associated particularly with an explicitly emotional singing style, and can make some performances seem more emotional than others. I discussed some of these in the last chapter, for example where I described *pukār* and what I call “sigh figures”. By exaggerating these musical elements in their performances, singers can enhance *ṭhumrī*'s reputation as a particularly emotional genre, appealing to those listeners who are attracted to the emotionally expressive nature of the genre.

Social normativity, agency and the common wisdom about *ṭhumrī*

In the previous sections of this chapter, I attempted to characterise the sonic-discursive world of *ṭhumrī*. I highlighted a set of statements about *ṭhumrī* which comprise the “common wisdom” about the genre. I suggested that they emerged from a set of musico-linguistic discourses about *ṭhumrī*, which have been utilised differently by a variety of musicians and listeners as part of wider social strategies. Some of these strategies are aimed at increasing the prestige and popularity of *ṭhumrī* itself; others at asserting the superiority of *khyāl* and *dhrupad* within North Indian classical music; and some are aimed at raising the status or perhaps the respectability of the speaker or performer. This occurs in an environment in which *ṭhumrī* and *ṭhumrī* singers have suffered from a historical association with courtesans and in which there is often fierce competition for performance opportunities amongst professional musicians.

Some of the discourses I discussed overlap with each other. Ideas about *ṭhumrī*'s being a classical genre, for example, sometimes come hand in hand with ideas about its presumed ancient origins and an imagined past religious function, thus creating overlap between the classicality and devotional discourses. In other respects, aspects of different discourses contradict each other. The universalism inherent in the idea that *ṭhumrī* is a natural, untrained out-pouring of emotion, as implied by the emotional discourse about *ṭhumrī*, contrasts with the idea that *ṭhumrī* is a genre for connoisseurs, whose message may only be understood by expert listeners. Sometimes, different, contrasting positions regarding *ṭhumrī* may co-exist within a single, broader discourse. Within the discourse of classicality as it pertains to North Indian music as a whole, for example, there are a variety of stances regarding the position and classicality of *ṭhumrī*.

Often, the particular way in which speakers employ elements of these discourses serves obvious social goals. When a *ṭhumrī* singer asserts the difficulty and classicality of the genre they sing, it serves to improve their own status in a context in which *ṭhumrī* is often marginalised with respect to *khyāl*. (I will discuss one example of such a strategy in the next section.)

Occasionally, however, speakers rehearse arguments which would appear to be detrimental to their own social interests. When singers, for example, buy into the Golden Age discourse about North Indian classical music, claiming that Indian classical music has fallen into decline and that modern-day singers are not as good as those who preceded them, they effectively diminish their own efforts, dismissing them as of relatively little value.

In order to explain the pervasive presence of the single common wisdom about *ṭhumrī*, it is not enough simply to draw attention to the wider discourse out of which each statement about *ṭhumrī* emerges, since a variety of possible, often contradictory statements about *ṭhumrī* may arise from these different discourses. Nor can the problem be solved simply by considering the various social strategies that might be in play when people talk about or perform *ṭhumrī*, since different people act according to a variety of different social agendas and sometimes even act in ways which would appear to be detrimental to their own social interests. In addition to a consideration of discourse and social strategies, a further social explanation is needed to account for the striking similarity of different descriptions of *ṭhumrī* by different people in different situations.

I would suggest that one way to account for this is by considering the way in which the common-wisdom description of *ṭhumrī* functions as a social norm; that is, I suggest that certain descriptions of *ṭhumrī* are not simply common (although they are) but also that they are normative. In her book, *A Sociocognitive Approach to Social Norms*, the social psychologist Nicole Dubois discusses the “prescriptive nature” of social norms. She writes, “It seems that, unlike social customs, ways, and traditions which are purely descriptive terms used to refer to what most people do and think, social norms, in addition to encompassing this type of descriptive information, include information of a prescriptive nature, for beneath the surface, the word norm insinuates that whatever is prevalent is somehow worthy (valued), is a reflection of social values, is what one should do as a member of the concerned social body.” She goes on to note the negative consequences that result from departing from social norms, when “whoever does not do what the majority of the people do is considered at best odd or original, and at worst, a deviant or misfit” (2003:2).

Rehearsing the common wisdom about *ṭhumrī* would appear to be one such type of normative behaviour. When they describe *ṭhumrī*, both musicians and music-lovers are motivated by a desire to display their musical expertise. For both groups of people, to disagree with or depart from the usual ways of describing *ṭhumrī* carries the risk of being considered ignorant or losing

one's legitimacy as an exponent of North Indian classical music. When, for example, Bhimsen Joshi uses *sārgam* in his *ṭhumrīs*, this may be a classicising feature, and also a link with the style of *ṭhumrī* that was most famously performed by his teacher's teacher, but it nevertheless exposes Joshi to criticism that what he sings is "not *ṭhumrī*" or otherwise inauthentic. For a musician of his fame and popularity, this is unlikely to carry very serious consequences, but for a lesser musician, such accusations by prominent music connoisseurs or senior musicians could threaten his or her very career.

In this situation, musicians have limited freedom to create new meanings and re-negotiate the status of *ṭhumrī*, but they cannot reject wholesale the common wisdom about the genre, or radically re-write it. They cannot, for example, do away with the label "semi-classical" altogether, for example, or indeed with the very idea of a hierarchy of different levels of classicality for different musical genres. In the next section of this chapter, I examine one such re-negotiation, looking at the linguistic and musical strategies employed by the singer Girija Devi. That she has been able to make a name for herself as a respected singer associated above all with *ṭhumrī* is evidence of the effectiveness of the strategies she has employed.

Social strategies and Girija Devi's *ṭhumrī* style

Girija Devi is a highly successful *ṭhumrī* singer. She is the recipient of prestigious national awards, she has sold numerous records and CDs and she is a household name in India and the Indian diaspora. She has achieved this position despite being a female singer, despite being known above all for her *ṭhumrī* renditions and despite being a member of the Banaras *gharānā*, the pedagogical school most associated with former courtesans. All of these render her particularly vulnerable to aspersions about her background. Her commercial success may be attributed in part to her success in cultivating and projecting a respectable public identity for herself.

Amelia Maciszewski has written about ways in which Devi has crafted her public persona. Most importantly, Maciszewski notes, Devi vigorously denies that she hails from a courtesan background and protests against being grouped with those singers who do. Maciszewski, for example, describes the anger Devi directed at one scholar, who had included her in a book about courtesans (2001b:9). On this occasion and at other times, Devi insisted that she belongs to a different social class from these other female performers. Rather, Maciszewski writes, Devi often emphasises her status as a respectably married woman (2001b: 8).

When she describes her musical training, Devi situates herself firmly within the classical tradition. She emphasises that she is not merely a semi-classical specialist, but that she has been

trained intensely in the classical genres *khyāl* and *dhrupad*. When I learned from her pupil, Sunanda Sharma, she commented that Devi placed great importance on the traditional *guru-śiṣya* (teacher-pupil) style of learning, emphasising the hours of practice required before a singer may achieve success in performance (2004, personal communication). Devi's choice of repertoire in performance also displays her classical training. Though she is best known for her renditions of semi-classical genres, she rarely gives a concert which does not start with a *khyāl* performance. Only once she has thus proved her authentic classical credentials will she move on to sing semi-classical genres.

Devi further emphasises her respectability by presenting in public a devout Hindu identity. In one interview, she insists that “music is my puja [worship]”, claiming, as she has claimed elsewhere, that initially she never sought to perform in public, only to express her religious devotion musically (*The Hindu* 10th March 2006). In her classes and on the concert stage, she insists on a spiritual interpretation of *thumrī* lyrics: as she describes it, *thumrī* is not the seductive song of the courtesan, but rather an expression of love for the god Krishna (see Maciszewski 2001b). Thus she prefaced one performance with the characteristic statement: “*Thumri* is so much like ornamenting a garden with different moods and worshipping Him with a peculiar indefinable essence” (Sukant 2007).⁴⁴

By emphasising her social status as a married woman, her devout Hinduism and her classical musical credentials, Devi dispels any doubts about her own personal respectability. In my analysis of Devi's *thumrī* style, I will argue that these discursive strategies have musical parallels. I will suggest ways in which Devi's attempt to project a respectable public identity leave traces on her *thumrī* style. Specifically, I will propose that, in singing *thumrī*, Devi (1) avoids musical characteristics that evoke courtesan culture and a sensuous femininity; (2) emphasises, instead, those musical elements that have devotional or religious connotations; and (3) offsets the light tone of *thumrī* by appropriating musical features from the serious, classical genre *dhrupad*. I will focus on four aspects of Devi's *thumrī* style: her rhythmic style, her ornamentation, her use of certain types of melodic figures and the *ālāp* sections that appears in her *thumrī* performances.

Rhythmic style

The rhythmic character of Devi's *thumrī* style sets her apart from other *thumrī* singers. In a typical *thumrī* performance, the singer's melodic line often displays a loose relationship with the underlying metre. Figure 4.22 shows an extract from Siddheshwari Devi's rendition of the

⁴⁴ This devout identity is not merely fabricated as part of Devi's public persona; it also informs Devi's behaviour in private. Maciszewski has described Devi's meditating in response to a question by a pupil (2001b:10). Nevertheless her choice to foreground this aspect of her personality in public constitutes a strategy to distance herself from courtesan associations.

ṭhumrī “*Rasa ke bhare tore naina*”, which demonstrates this. Note here that the melodic line often seems to relate to the underlying metre in a haphazard way, weaving in and out of alignment with the *tāl*. As is normal in *ṭhumrī*, the metre comes most to the fore when the singer sings the *mukhrā*. This occurs twice in this extract, the first time from H1:1 to I1:1 and the second time from U1:1 to V1:1. In a typical fashion, the *mukhrā* here foregrounds the underlying metre in order to emphasise the *sam*, the first beat of the new cycle: here, the syllable “*nai-*” of the word “*naina*”. Elsewhere, during freer, improvised passages, the melodic line engages only loosely with the metrical cycle. Clear references to the metre occasionally appear, for example in E1:2 to F1:1, where Siddheshwari Devi sings a note on each *mātra* of E1:2, or in T1:1, where she prepares for the subsequent close engagement between melody and *tāl* in the *mukhrā*. Most of the time, however, Siddheshwari Devi sings melodic figures whose rhythmic contours seem relatively independent of the *tāl*.⁴⁵

Figure 4.22, extract from Devi (2008), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Bhairavī*, 01:46 to 02:43.

Tāl = *kaharvā*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ C#. See CD 2, track 20.

The musical score for Figure 4.22 is a 16-measure cycle of a *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Bhairavī*. The score is written on a single staff with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a 4/4 time signature. The lyrics are in Devanagari script. The cycle is divided into 16 measures, each labeled with a letter and a number in a box (e.g., D1, E1, F1, G1, H1, I1, J1, K1, L1, M1, N1, O1, P1, Q1, R1, S1, T1, U1, V1). The lyrics are: sā - va - ri - yā to - he to - he ga - ra - vā la - gā lū sā - va - ri - yā ra - sa ke bha - re to - re nai - na ā re ā jā sā - va - ri - yā sā - va - ri - yā to - he ga - ra - vā la - gā lū ā sā - va - ri - yā to - he ga - ra - vā - vā la - gā ga - ra - vā ga - ra - vā la - gā lū ra - sa ke bha - re to - re nai - na. The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, slurs, and dynamic markings.

⁴⁵ This extract is an example of what Martin Clayton has called a “melismatic” rhythmic style, defined by the apparent absence of a “close relationship between the *tāl* and surface rhythm” of a performance. He contrasts this with what he calls a “syllabic” rhythmic style, or its variant the “syllabic-accentual” style, in which the surface rhythm of a performance is tied into the succession of *mātras* in the metrical cycle (2000: 47-56).

Figure 4.23 shows another example of the typically flexible way in which musicians weave in and out of the *tāl* in performances of *ṭhumrī*. This comes from the *ṭhumrī* “*Kauna galī gaye śyama*”, sung by Rasoolan Bai. The *mukhrā* occurs twice in this extract, once from E: 4 to F: 1 and then from H: 4 to I: 1. In between these two renditions of the *mukhrā*, most of what Rasoolan Bai sings seems relatively independent of the *tāl*. In some cases, for example, her melodic line seems to imply that strong beats fall in different places from where they actually occur. At the end of the top line, she accents S, the tonic. Listening to her voice alone and not the *tablā*, one might assume that this would occur on a strong beat of the metrical cycle; in fact, it occurs just after one, while the relatively unimportant R in fact coincides with the *tablā*’s downbeat.

Note one recurring metrical constant here, even in passages that seem quite independent of the *tāl*. Here, Rasoolan Bai repeatedly sings the figure SRM, each time starting halfway through a beat and landing on M on the next beat, giving the two previous notes an upbeat feel. (I have put boxes around it on the transcription. In the terminology I suggested in Chapter 2, this repetition is an instance of a “start-rhyme strategy”, which continues into the *mukhrā* at H: 4, which also starts SRM.) The first three times she sings this figure, Rasoolan Bai sings it on relatively weak beats in the middle of the *vibhāgs* in which they occur. When she sings it for the final time, in H: 1 to H: 2, this figure lands on the downbeat of the second *vibhāg* of the cycle, after which Rasoolan Bai’s melodic line then sticks relatively closely to the underlying pulse, leading up to the *mukhrā* at the end of the passage. There is a psychological logic to this. The protagonist of this *ṭhumrī* is a woman, searching desperately for her absent lover as she tries to find out which road he has taken. In this highly expressive *ṭhumrī*, this rhythmic feature seems in line with the depiction of an emotional protagonist, who repeatedly attempts to start to say something clearly, each time getting more emotional and singing in an increasingly undefined and uncontrolled way before breaking off. On the final attempt, higher in pitch than the previous, the protagonist, as if finally mustering the strength to complete her sentence, sings a longer phrase-unit, with a much closer relationship to the *tāl* throughout, preparing for the *mukhrā* that follows.

Figure 4.23, extract from Rasoolan Bai (1964), extract from *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Jogiyā*.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ G. See CD 2, track 21.

(m) kau-na_ ga-lī gaye śyama e ri śya_

a_ śya_ ma_ śya_ e ri śya - ma

e ri śya - ma ga - lī gaye ga - ye_

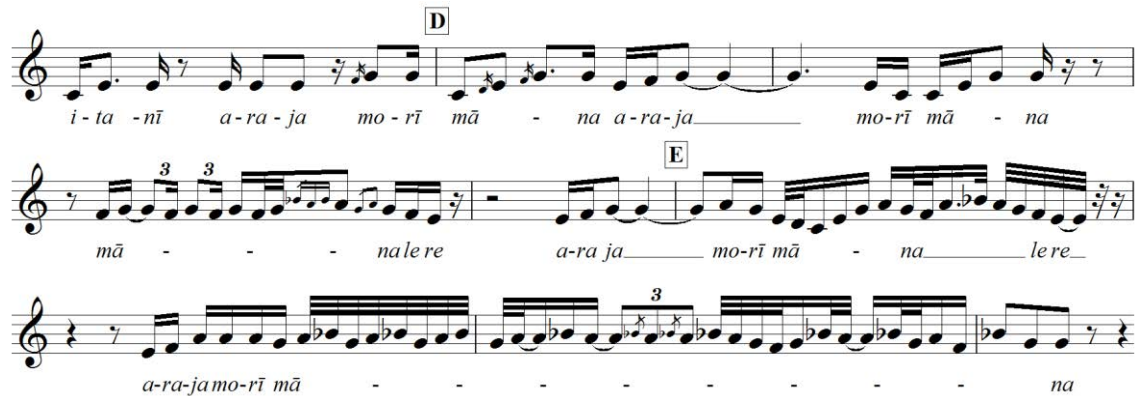
śya - ma_ kau - na_ ga - lī gaye śyama

When I was learning to sing *ṭhumrī*, my teacher would encourage me to lose track of the *tāl* while singing improvised passages. When we practised with *tablā* accompaniment, she would sometimes stop me from singing for a while and distract me by talking to me, so that I lost track of what part of the metrical cycle the *tablā*-player was playing. Then she would get me to practise finding my place in the metrical cycle again. First she would have me sing without listening to the *tablā* and then, while still singing, I would have to listen to the *tablā* and try to find out what part of the metrical cycle was being played, until finally I was ready to pick up the *mukhṛā* in the correct place. I found this very difficult indeed; nevertheless, my teacher insisted that it was crucial that I learn how to do this if ever I were to be able to sing *ṭhumrī*.

When Girija Devi improvises, however, unlike many other *ṭhumrī* singers, her melodic line almost always displays a close relationship with the underlying *tāl*. With rhythmic precision, she engages with the *tāl* throughout her performances, often, for example, emphasising strong beats with slight accents. Figure 4.24 shows an extract from her rendition of the *ṭhumrī* “*Itanī araja morī māna*”. Note the rhythmic precision of her style here. Her melodic line engages with the underlying *tāl* throughout, often, for example, emphasising downbeats with slight accents. Notice the clear sense of the *tāl* even in the long melisma setting the word “*māna*” at the end of the passage. There is nothing haphazard about the timing of Devi’s melodic line.

Figure 4.24, extract from Devi (1989), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Khamāj*, 01:33 to 02:23.

Tāl = 16-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A. See CD 2, track 22.



In addition to this general sense of rhythmic clarity in Devi's *ṭhumrī* improvisations, Devi also makes a specific feature of rhythmic manipulation and play. Note Devi's use of a syncopated figure setting "mo-rī" just before D. This creates rhythmic tension which is resolved at D, emphasising the *sam*. Here, she introduces the syncopated figure as a way of varying the *mukhrā*; in its original, unvaried form, it is not syncopated, but rather occurs on the beat, as shown in the extract in figure 4.25. Devi often employs syncopated figures in her *ṭhumrī* renditions; they rely on the singer's ability to manipulate a close relationship with the underlying pulse in order to generate rhythmic excitement.

Figure 4.25, *mukhrā* in Devi (1989), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Khamāj*, 05:02 to 05:12.

Tāl = 16-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A. See CD 2, track 23.



Figure 4.26, an extract from later on in Devi's performance of the same *ṭhumrī*, is also typical of Devi's distinctive rhythmic style. This passage contains a number of different settings of the text *nā javo*, meaning "don't go". Note the sequential pattern shown here starting just before letter T and continuing through the next *vibhāg*. Devi sings three renditions of a two-note falling figure, each setting the word *nā*. Each of the first two renditions is followed by a rest, producing a unit shown here as three semi-quaver notes in length. The first two versions start off the beat, generating rhythmic tension and a syncopated feel. (In fact, Devi had already started to hide the beat slightly earlier: the "*nā*" that immediately precedes this is off the beat, too.) Only on its final rendition, halfway through the *vibhāg* following letter T, does this figure occur on the beat, resolving the rhythmic tension just created. By repeating a figure of three units' length against a metrical cycle that subdivides into halves and quarters, the figure is staggered so that it can start

off the beat but correct itself on its final rendition. In the next bar, there is another instance of a figure of three units' length staggered against the underlying metre. This time the figure is transcribed as three demi-semi-quaver notes in length. Here it starts on the beat and ends off the beat, finally giving way to a syncopated setting of the word “*jāvo*”. In both these cases, the ever-increasing tension produced by these repeated figures embodies the meaning of the words, demonstrating the increasing desperation of the narrator who sings “*nā, nā, nā jāvo*” (“don’t, don’t, don’t go”) to her lover.

Figure 4.26, extract from Devi (1989), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Khamāj*, 07:41 to 08:14.

Tāl = 16-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ *A*. See CD 2, track 24.



A similar example of rhythmic manipulation occurs a few seconds later (figure 4.27). Here, notice how Devi refuses to sing any note on each beat until she reaches the *sam* at letter W, thus emphasising her arrival on the first beat of the metrical cycle.

Figure 4.27, extract from Devi (1989), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Khamāj*, 08:59 to 09:12.

Tāl = 16-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ *A*. See CD 2, track 25.



The calculated rhythmic play and rhythmically exacting style that are characteristic of Devi’s *ṭhumrīs* are rarely found in the *ṭhumrīs* of other singers. This may be a result of Devi’s desire to distance herself from courtesan and former courtesan singers of *ṭhumrī*. The Indian musicologist Irfan Zuberi told me that amongst various senior tabla players with whom he had spoken, there was a general impression that the *bājīs*, the former courtesans, could not keep time. They apparently would say, “*Jahā bājī kā sam, wahā hamara sam*”, that is, “Wherever the *bājī*’s downbeat happens to be, that is where our downbeat will have to be.” One gets the impression of a singer who becomes lost in the metrical cycle and simply sings the *mukhrā* without any concern for what the *tablā* player is playing, while the poor *tablā* player must then re-adjust to fit in with what she is singing. Devi’s exacting rhythmic approach might be informed by a desire to assert her assured awareness of the *tāl* against doubts about the rhythmic ability of *ṭhumrī* singers.

The rhythmic precision of her *ṭhumrī* style may also be traced to sources from elsewhere in the North Indian classical tradition. In *dhrupad*'s metered sections, the singer's melodic line engages with the *tāl* throughout and rhythmic manipulation forms the basis of the majority of improvised passages, known as *layakārī*. Devi's use of rhythmic play also echoes some of the musical devices that singers employ when they perform *tāns* in *khyāl* and is informed by the same principle that lies behind the use of cadential formula known as a *tihāī*, in which a melodic figure is repeated three times in a row, staggering against the underlying metre, so that it emphasises the *sam* on its final rendition. If the audible expressions of pleasure that emanate from audiences of connoisseurs are anything to go by, it would seem that one of the most enjoyable experiences for the listener of *khyāl* is to marvel at the virtuosity involved in singing repeated figures such as these, that only occur in the correct place in the metrical cycle on their final rendition.

Rhythmic improvisation (including *layakārī*) was also one of the features of the historical *bandīś ṭhumrī*. Manuel suggests that this feature occurred in *bandīś ṭhumrī* as a result of the influence of *dhrupad*. However, as Manuel notes, this style of *ṭhumrī*, performed by nineteenth-century Lucknow musicians, is now "virtually extinct". He points out that when modern-day singers perform *bandīś ṭhumrīs*, they tend to perform them "in *choṭā khayāl* style, emphasizing virtuosic *tāns*" (over rhythmic manipulation). Moreover, he notes, by time Indian classical music started to be recorded, in 1902, "the *bol banāo ṭhumrī* had not only begun to eclipse the *bandish ṭhumrī* in popularity, but also to influence strongly the *style* of the contemporary *bandish ṭhumrī*", with the result that twentieth-century *bandīś ṭhumrīs* are often sung in *bol banāo* style (1989: 103-4). When modern-day audiences imagine the *ṭhumrī* of the past, they are much more likely to think of the emotion, sensuousness and subtle word-play of courtesans' performances than of abstract, *dhrupad*-style rhythmic play: rather, this musical feature has become obscured in fantasies about the origins of *ṭhumrī* style, as a result of the rise of the *bol banāo ṭhumrī*. For listeners who hear Devi's use of rhythmic manipulation in *ṭhumrī*, then, it seems much more likely that it would be reminiscent of *dhrupad* or *khyāl*, genres with which they would probably be very familiar, than the rarely performed *bandīś ṭhumrī*.

Devi's subtle evocation of the sound-world of *dhrupad* or *khyāl tāns* in her *ṭhumrī* performances mitigates the genre's questionable status within North Indian classical music. By appropriating features from classical genres, Devi increases the classicality of the merely "semi-classical" *ṭhumrī*. In a system in which classical genres are seen as more serious and more musically heavyweight than their semi-classical companions, any move towards creating a more classical ethos in *ṭhumrī* heightens the prestige of the genre; it also increases its respectability. Alluding musically to *dhrupad* evokes particularly valuable connotations. Musicians describe *dhrupad* as a weighty, esoteric genre. Sung almost exclusively by men, it has never been associated with

courtesans. Its reputation as a serious, abstract, masculine genre contrasts with *ṭhumrī*'s reputation as feminine, lightweight and erotic. For Devi, singing *ṭhumrī* in a markedly classical way also serves as a way of demonstrating musically her own classical training. It is especially significant that Devi might want to borrow musical features from *dhrupad*: she often remarks in interview that *dhrupad* formed a part of her classical training, though she never performs the genre in public (see Maciszewski 2001b: 6).

Ornamentation

Just like her rhythmic style, Girija Devi's melodic style, too, carries socially significant connotations. *Ṭhumrī* singers differ greatly in their use of ornamentation. Figure 4.9, above, is an extract from a *ṭhumrī* performed by Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, a singer renowned for his highly-ornamented style in both *ṭhumrī* and *khyāl*. In the next chapter, I discuss a number of singers' approaches to ornamentation in *ṭhumrī*. Begum Akhtar's *Nā jā balama parades*, transcribed in the next chapter in figure 5.5, is typical of her ornate *ṭhumrī* style. There, Akhtar makes generous use of the mordent-like ornament *murkī* and frequently sings long, florid melismas.

In general, Banaras-*gharānā* singers tend to employ less ornamentation than other *ṭhumrī* singers, particularly towards the start of their performances. Devi's melodic style, meanwhile, is much more restrained in its use of embellishment even than the style of her Banaras-*gharānā* colleagues. Her *ṭhumrīs* are more syllabic and contain fewer high-speed ornaments than those of many other singers. Where Devi does employ rapid embellishment, it is often in highly formulaic ways. I noted in Chapter 2 that she frequently initiates phrases (especially those which centre on her upper register) with a rapid upwards gesture: after starting phrases in this way, however, she normally continues them in a relatively simple manner (see for example figures 4.28 and 4.29, where I have put boxes around these upward gestures on the transcription).

Figure 4.28, extract from Devi (1992), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Bhairavī*, 03:19 to 03:51.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ D. See CD 2, track 26.



Figure 4.29, extract from Devi (1989), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Khamāj*, 07:13 to 07:31.

Tāl = 16-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A. See CD 2, track 27.



In Indian classical music, the extent to which a genre is ornamented is an index of its seriousness. In performances of the most serious classical genre, *dhrupad*, musicians employ only sparse ornamentation; where they do, it is strictly regulated. In their book on *dhrupad*, Richard Widdess and Ritwik Sanyal point out that this contributes to *dhrupad*'s reputation as a “disciplined, restrained style” and that any elaborate ornamentation in *dhrupad* would be seen to be at odds with the music's “spiritual purpose” (2004:41). *Khyāl* and *ṭhumrī*, meanwhile, tend to be much freer in their use of ornaments. *Khyāl* performances normally involve increasing amounts of melodic embellishment, eventually culminating in passages of virtuoso display, in which ornamental flourishes (*tāns*) become the primary source of musical interest. In a typical *ṭhumrī* performance, melodic figures are often presented in a highly ornamented way, involving generous use of *murkī* (a mordent-like figure), *ṭhumrī*'s most characteristic ornament.

By tending towards the melodic austerity of *dhrupad*, Devi sings a style of *ṭhumrī* that sounds more serious than that of many of her colleagues and predecessors. When she talks about *ṭhumrī*, she refutes the idea that it is a light or trivial genre, instead insisting on its classical seriousness; her sparing use of ornamentation in *ṭhumrī* reinforces that argument musically.

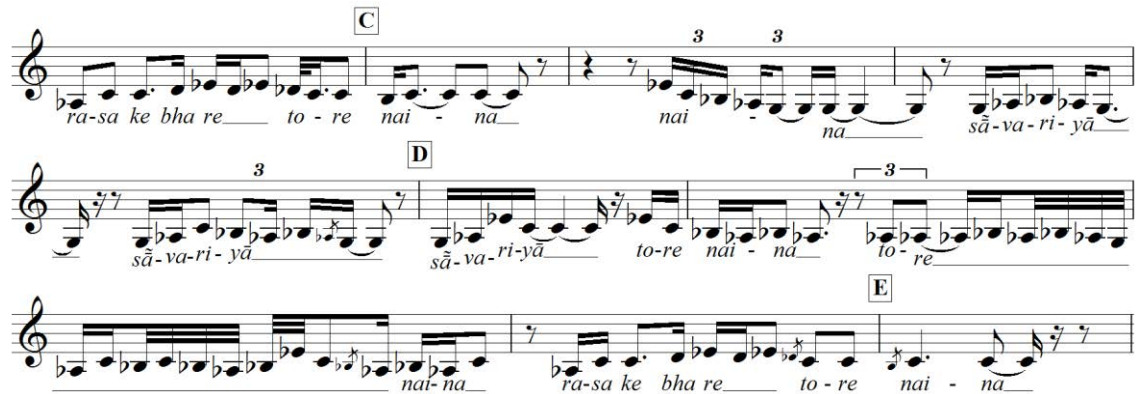
“Sigh figures” and pukār

Just as she avoids the heavy use of some of *ṭhumrī*'s characteristic ornamentation, so Devi also avoids some of the musical strategies often associated with *ṭhumrī*. In the last chapter, I noted the frequent occurrence of *pukār* and what I called “sigh figures” in *ṭhumrī* performances, noting their strong emotional connotations. For most singers and listeners, expressive figures such as these are crucial to the aesthetic of *ṭhumrī*, in which, unlike in classical genres, the expression of the emotions of the lyrics is of the utmost importance. I discussed a number of examples of these in the last chapter, including in a performance by Rasoolan Bai of the *ṭhumrī* “*Rasa ke bhare tore naina*” (see figures 3.11, 3.12 and 3.13).

Sigh figures are almost absent from Devi's *ṭhumrī* performances. Figure 4.30 is an extract from her rendition of the same *ṭhumrī*. Note that Devi's singing is more emotionally understated than that of Rasoolan Bai. Where Rasoolan Bai makes use of exaggerated dynamic contrast, to great emotional effect, Devi varies the volume of her singing very little in performance.

Figure 4.30, extract from Devi (1992), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Bhairavī*, 01:42 to 02:30.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ D. See CD 2, track 28.



I would like to argue that Devi avoids sigh figures because they constitute a sonic reminder of *ṭhumrī*'s previous performance context, the courtesan's salon. Maciszewski writes of the characteristics of *ṭhumrī* as it was performed by courtesans: "in [an] intimate atmosphere, a courtesan would perform the items in her repertoire..., emotively expressing lyrics and innuendos through gestures, facial expression, and histrionic vocal techniques..." (1998:233). Sigh figures involve a direct emotional appeal to the listeners and are reminiscent of the intimate environment of the salon, where the singer would make eye-contact with her listeners and plead with them in an exaggerated show of emotion. Devi's *ṭhumrī* performances, meanwhile, though still beautifully expressive, avoid these overt shows of musical longing. In some of her most expressive moments she simply sings a long, held upper tonic, during which she closes her eyes and assumes a meditative demeanour. Her *ṭhumrī* style thereby embodies her devotional conception of the genre, while steering clear of the negative associations of any reference to courtesans.

One further aspect of Devi's wider cultural environment might also have influenced her avoidance of sigh figures in her *ṭhumrī* performances. These musical figures abound in the songs that appear in contemporary film music. The desire to distance herself from this popular musical culture, with a far lower status than classical music, is a further possible motivation influencing Devi's stylistic choices.

Ālāp

Finally, I would like to look at a structural feature of Devi's *ṭhumrī* style: her decision to use *ālāp* sections at the start of her *ṭhumrīs*. A *ṭhumrī* performance normally opens with an unmetered passage. In the first half of the twentieth century, these were short and seemingly insignificant. The singer would sing the tonic and perhaps a phrase or two to introduce the *rāg*, before the singing the first line of the composition, which would coincide with the entry of the *tablā* and the start of the metered section of the performance. This is true of both the earliest

recordings, gramophone records just three minutes in length, as well as the first longer recordings. The example transcribed in figure 4.1 is typical. The few notes Joshi sings before he introduces of the first line of the composition are hardly worth mentioning; they certainly do not form a substantial part of the performance.

In the last few decades, some musicians have started to sing increasingly long and sophisticated introductions at the start of their *ṭhumrī* performances, one or two minutes in length. These are no longer insignificant, throwaway passages, but rather an important component of the performance. Girija Devi was one of the first to introduce this new structural feature into her *ṭhumrī* performances. Figure 4.31 is typical of the way in which Devi opens her *ṭhumrīs*.

Figure 4.31, extract from Devi (2004), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Bihāg*, 00:00 to 01:55.

Tāl = *tīntāl*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ G#. See CD 2, track 29.

The musical score is presented on ten staves. Each staff begins with a time stamp in a box: 00:00, 00:10, 00:20, 00:30, 00:40, 00:50, 01:00, 01:10, 01:20, 01:30, 01:40, and 01:50. The notes are written on a five-line staff with a treble clef. The lyrics are written below the notes. The lyrics include: ā re nā, o re nā, ā, re nā, de re nā, ā, ā, ā rī, nū, re nā, nā, re nā, de re nā, de re nā, ā, re nā, ā, re nā, dere nā, re nā, dere nā.

Some *ṭhumrī* singers, including my teacher, Devi's pupil, and presumably also Devi herself, call these introductory passages *ālāps*. This use of terminology is important. Strictly speaking, *ālāp* does not belong in *ṭhumrī* at all, but rather in *dhrupad*. In *dhrupad*, an *ālāp* is also an introductory, unmetered and untexted section of a performance that occurs before the entry of the *pakhāvaj* and the first line of the text. There, however, an *ālāp* is a lengthy passage dedicated to the methodical, note-by-note exposition of the *rāg* of the performance (*vistār*). A *dhrupad* *ālāp* might easily last for half an hour or more. *Vistār* has also long been a feature of *khyāl*, where it has migrated from *dhrupad* and is often called "*ālāp*". There, it normally starts

before the entry of the *tablā* and the composition, and continues or restarts after the introduction of the composition, in the metered section which follows.

By singing longer introductory passages in *ṭhumrī*, and by calling them *ālāps*, singers evoke the opening of a *dhrupad* performance. This is particularly true of introductions such as the one in figure 4.31 which, like in *dhrupad*, involve a gradual expansion of the overall range as the singer introduces successively higher pitches. Also, note here that rather than choosing to set this section to the lyrics (which singers often do and which is in line with their opinion that *ṭhumrī* performances should always focus on the lyrics of the composition), she decides to sing all of this *ālāp* to the meaningless vocables “*ā*”, “*re*”, “*nā*”, “*de*” and “*rī*”. This is reminiscent of the so-called “*nom tom* syllables” to which the *dhrupad* *ālāp* is set, which are also meaningless vocables.⁴⁶

Girija Devi’s use of the long *ṭhumrī* *ālāp* is one of a number of features of her *ṭhumrī* style that have their origins in *dhrupad*. As with those other features, it seems likely that this musical borrowing from *dhrupad* is motivated by Devi’s desire to assert the classical respectability of *ṭhumrī*. Even within *dhrupad*, *ālāp* is an especially classical feature; in *dhrupad* performances, it is in *ālāp* sections that musicians foreground the exposition of the *rāg*, which is the central determinant of classicism in Indian classical music.

However, it is not just because they sound classical that *ālāp* sections carry connotations that are appropriate to Devi’s conception of *ṭhumrī*. Devi frequently insists that *ṭhumrī* is a devotional genre, describing performance as a kind of *pūjā* (worship). Occurring at the start of the performance, before the start of the metrical cycle, and often sung in a calm, meditative manner, *ālāp* provides the ideal musical venue for the cultivation of a spiritual aesthetic. In addition to all this, *ālāp* also has a prestigious historical pedigree. Its origins may be traced in the *rāgālaṭṭi* of the thirteenth-century Sanskrit treatise the *Sa gīta-ratnākara*; many musicians and listeners think of *ālāp* as an ancient feature. By including an *ālāp* in her *ṭhumrīs*, Devi thus also situates the genre within a historical tradition that far predates the nineteenth-century courtesan’s salon.

Other musicians, other strategies

In this chapter, I have focussed on the *ṭhumrī* renditions of Girija Devi, examining some of the ways in which social considerations have influenced her musical decisions. In particular, I have analysed her musical decisions as part of a strategy to increase her prestige and respectability in a context in which *ṭhumrī* singers have a lower social status than their classical counterparts. I

⁴⁶ *Bihāg* is also an unusually classical *rāg* for a *ṭhumrī* performance, although singers other than Devi (for example Bade Ghulam Ali Khan) do also sing *ṭhumrīs* in this *rāg*. The vast majority of the time, however, Devi sings *ṭhumrīs* in semi-classical *rāgs*. The use of classical *rāgs* is not a prominent feature of her *ṭhumrī* style.

chose to focus on Devi because of her prominent position within North Indian classical music, because she is the teacher of my singing teacher and because I, along with many other music-lovers, consider her recordings to be beautiful works of great artistic genius. However, many other singers, too, have faced social challenges similar to the ones that Devi faced. Alongside her study of Devi, for example, Maciszewski also highlights the social strategies employed by a number of different female singers of North Indian classical and semi-classical music (see 2001a and 2001b). It seems likely that the musical choices of other singers, too, will have been influenced by aspects of their social environment.

My teacher, for example, the vocalist Sunanda Sharma, is one of Devi's pupils. Although she, like Devi, is a Banaras-*gharānā* singer and known for her great skill in rendering semi-classical genres, her particular social situation differs significantly from Devi's. Sharma was born much later than Devi, into a musical context in which *thumrī* singers were no longer necessarily assumed always to be courtesans. She grew up in Punjab (not Banaras) and hails from a middle-class family of amateur music-lovers. Her respectability has never been subject to question; nor can there be any suspicion that she is descended from a courtesan lineage. Nevertheless, as a pupil of Devi who often sings *thumrī* in concert (and in fact also teaches a summer school on *thumrī* in London every summer), she has a great deal invested in claiming a high status for the genre.

Like Devi, Sharma insists on her classical training and sings *khyāl* at the start of most of her performances. Also like Devi, Sharma sings very long *ālāp* sections at the start of her *thumrī* renditions. On one recording, she sings an *ālāp* lasting over three minutes; in my lessons, she once sang a *thumrī ālāp* lasting over ten minutes. This is in line with her opinion that *thumrī* is a serious, devotional and "very deep" genre (2009, personal communication).

Unlike Devi, however, Sharma rarely foregrounds rhythmic manipulation in her *thumrī* renditions, although she demonstrates her expertise in this technique very clearly in her renderings of other North Indian classical genres. She further departs from Devi's style in her abundant use of the sigh figures that Devi seems to avoid. (See figure 4.32 for examples of this. As before, I have marked these with hairpins on the transcription.) One may attribute this heavy use of sigh figures and *pukār* to her admiration of Siddheshwari Devi, a Banaras-*gharānā* contemporary of Devi, whose *thumrī* renditions are famously expressive and whom Sharma often praises. However, there are also social reasons for this musical choice. Given her unambiguously respectable background, Sharma does not have to distance herself from the courtesans of the previous generation. Accordingly, she tells a somewhat different story about *thumrī* from that told by Devi. While she, like Devi, offers a devotional interpretation of the genre, she also frequently emphasises that it also deals with the everyday emotional experience of love and longing. For Sharma, *thumrī*'s emotionalism is its most important characteristic and

the source of its beauty. Her use of sigh figures is the musical corollary of this opinion, made possible by her social situation.

Figure 4.32, extract from Sharma (2003 [2002]), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg miśra Deś*, 09:35 to 10:01.

Tāl = *tīntāl*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A#. See CD 2, track 30.

The musical score consists of three staves of music in a single system. The first staff begins with a 'V1' box above the first measure. The lyrics under the first staff are: *kā - rī*, *ba-da-ri - yā*, *ba ra - se*, *mā*. The second staff has a 'W1' box above the fifth measure. The lyrics under the second staff are: *kā - rī*, *ba-da-ri-yā*, *ba-ra-se*, *ba-da-ri-yā*, *ba - ra-se*. The third staff has a 'Y1' box above the fifth measure. The lyrics under the third staff are: *mā*, *ba - da - ri - yā*, *ba-ra - se*, *mā*. The music is written in a single melodic line on a treble clef staff. It features various ornaments, including triplets (marked with '3') and 'sigh' figures (marked with 'X1' and 'Y1'). The rhythm is indicated by vertical lines and dots above the notes, consistent with the *tīntāl* meter.

Other singers take different approaches. My analysis of a large number of twentieth-century *ṭhumrī* recordings suggests that *ṭhumrī* singers in the twentieth century have employed a variety of different, intersecting rhetorical and musical strategies in order to negotiate a place for themselves within the North Indian classical tradition. A detailed examination of these, however, is beyond the scope of this chapter. Research into the extra-musical connotations of musical style in Indian classical music is sparse: it seems likely that further examination of the musical decisions and social agendas of a variety of North Indian classical singers (of *ṭhumrī* and also of other genres) could shed further light on the important roles played by music's social environment and the social connotations of musical features in informing musical taste.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored one aspect of the social significance of *ṭhumrī* style, examining the relationship between the music of *ṭhumrī* and the strategies which musicians employ in response to the particular social challenges they face. I outlined some of the discursive themes that recur in speech and writing about *ṭhumrī*, showing how they emerge out of the historical and social environment of North Indian classical music in the twentieth century. I argued that these discursive themes have musical corollaries and that they affect both the way that listeners understand *ṭhumrī* when they hear it in performance and the musical decisions of the singers who perform it. My arguments support the position of Theo van Leeuwen and other social semioticians (discussed in the introduction to this chapter) when they suggest that discourses can be multi-modal, encompassing not only linguistic signs, but also signs in other other semiotic modes (such as music, dress or behaviour).

Focussing on the vocalist Girija Devi, I then considered how social factors might inform the idiomatic style of one well-known musician. I discussed the significance of her precise rhythmic style and her use of rhythmic play, her restrained use of ornamentation, her avoidance of sigh figures and her use of *ālāp* in *ṭhumrī*; I proposed that her musical decisions are informed by her position as a woman *ṭhumrī* singer claiming personal respectability while singing a genre commonly associated with a suspect erotic femininity. I suggest that her musical style is part of a project to construct a respectable public identity for the female *ṭhumrī* singer in Indian classical music. (I return to issues about *ṭhumrī* and gender in the next chapter.) She demonstrates in the context of North Indian classical music Tim Rice's description of how "music lives through the agency of, and is given meaning by, individuals operating in particular social, cultural, economic and historical contexts" (1994: 8).

This chapter is by no means an exhaustive characterisation of *ṭhumrī* and *ṭhumrī* styles in the twentieth century and it does not offer a comprehensive inventory of all the social concerns that have affected *ṭhumrī* singers. Nevertheless, I hope to have presented an overall picture of the kinds of issues that have influenced musicians' words about *ṭhumrī* and their aesthetic decisions when they perform it. As Pierre Bourdieu argues in *Distinction* (1984), I hope to have demonstrated how even seemingly abstract aesthetic choices can be grounded in social structures (involving issues such as prestige and respectability), so that musicians' choices as they perform can be seen not as the result of some kind of transcendent, objective musical judgement, but as statements of social identity and strategies through which they might attempt to improve their social status. In the next chapter, I will explore one further aspect of the relationship between *ṭhumrī*'s music and its wider social context, focussing on the relationship between music and gender.

CHAPTER FIVE

Thumrī and the musical mediation of gender

Introduction

In an interview with my singing teacher, Sunanda Sharma, I once asked her about her experience of singing *thumrī*. Specifically, I asked her if singing *thumrī* felt any different from singing *khyāl*. She replied with a detailed description of some of the technical details of *khyāl* style. After this, she said, “But when it comes to *thumrī*, I feel very feminine.” She continued, “Even the male singers, when they sing *thumrī*, they feel they are feminine; they feel their femininity.” Sharma is not alone in considering *thumrī* a feminine genre: many other musicians and music-lovers also describe the genre in feminine terms. This chapter will consider some of the implications of these gendered ideas about the genre.

Over the last three decades, as part of the advent of the so-called “New” or “critical” musicology, musicologists have paid increasing attention to the kinds of relationships that might exist between music and gender. Susan McClary, most famously, has considered this topic in a variety of situations. She argues that the music can represent aspects of culture-specific gender identities and that engaging with music is one of the ways in which people learn gendered behaviour and emotions. She writes, “The codes marking gender difference in music are informed by the prevalent attitudes of their time. But they also themselves participate in social formation, inasmuch as individuals learn how to be gendered beings through their interactions with cultural discourses such as music” (1991: 7). Elsewhere, she considers ways in which music might also contribute to the formation of other kinds of social identity, writing that “the power of music ... resides in its ability to shape the way we experience our bodies, emotions, subjectivities, desires, and social relations” (2000: 6). As well as noting ways in which music might act in the enculturation of performers and listeners into certain types of gender identity, she also suggests that music can be a site of critical agency, arguing that people can use music to challenge gender norms. She writes that “music does not just passively reflect society; it also serves as a public forum within which various models of gender organization (along with other aspects of social life) are asserted, adopted, contested, and negotiated” (1991: 7-8).

In this chapter, I will examine the relationship between music and gender in *thumrī* from a music-analytical perspective. I will attempt to answer the following questions:

- How do musicians and listeners of Indian classical music conceive of the relationship between *thumrī* and femininity?

- In what ways do *ṭhumrī*'s musical characteristics suggest particular, culture-specific models of femininity?
- How might it happen that the act of listening to or performing *ṭhumrī* could affect the very intimate and personal ways in which people might experience their own gender?

In addressing these questions, I will pay particular attention to descriptions of the gendered nature of particular musical features. In line with the semiotic music-analytical approach I have adopted throughout this thesis, I will suggest that particular musical features in *ṭhumrī* carry shared gendered associations within particular communities of performers and listeners of North Indian classical music. In the second half of the chapter, I will focus on one particular *ṭhumrī* performance, given by Sharma, and on her own description of it. Based both on her statements and my analysis of her performance, I will argue that *ṭhumrī*'s musical characteristics and lyrics are capable of suggesting particular models of femininity. I will advocate a model of listening subjectivity derived from recent work by Tia DeNora and Nicola Dibben; they have theorised that music affords subject positions for its listeners, thus offering them tools with which to craft social identities. I will suggest that this model offers a way of accounting for Sharma's statements about her performance and, more broadly, a way of understanding how music can operate as a mediator between social norms (like gender) and the subjective experience of identity.

Musical femininity: *ṭhumrī* and the gendering of style in North Indian classical music

Dhrupad

In the last chapter, I noted Peter Manuel's observation that it is possible to arrange the genres of North Indian classical music on a spectrum, from most to least classical; this spectrum has implications in terms of gender. At one end of the spectrum, *dhrupad*, the most serious, classical genre, also carries strongly masculine associations. A number of factors contribute to this general impression. One such factor concerns the gendered make-up of its performers. The vast majority of performers of *dhrupad* are men. Widdess and Sanyal note that this gendered division of labour "reflects the sociology of court music in the nineteenth century". However, they do refer to rare examples of female court musicians who sang *dhrupad* and point out that recent years have seen an increasing number of female singers' specialising in the genre (2004: 34).

In line with the gendered profile of its performers, many scholars and musicians consider *dhrupad*'s musical style masculine in nature, or especially suited to men's voices. This idea leads one music reviewer to praise a female performer for managing to sing the genre despite

being a woman, writing, “A female vocalist, Gita Deb sang in *dhrupad* style... It is laudable that though the constraints of the female voice do no suit *dhrupad* style of singing, she certainly did a commendable job” (*Times of India*, January 1st 1989). Similarly, on the website of the music school of Ustad Nasir Moinuddin Dagar, the following is stated in the biography of his disciples, the Nandy sisters: “It was one of the greatest achievements of Guru Aminuddin Dagar that he was able to forge such a duo of female *Dhrupad* singers while going against the generally held perception that *Dhrupad* was a masculine form of music” (*Dhrupad Sangeet Ashram* accessed 2012). The musicologist Ashok Ranade has suggested that *dhrupad*’s masculine style is partially responsible for the decline of the genre relative to *khyāl*. He writes, “If you develop an excessively masculine style of music which does not attract women, you are not only restricting your pool of talent, but also your audience profiles” (Ranade 1999).

In these descriptions, *dhrupad*’s masculine musical style is linked in some way with the gender of its performer, whether in the observation that it does not “attract women” or in comments that women are able to sing it in spite of its inappropriateness for their voices. However, the authors of these comments do not go into further detail about what precisely is masculine (or especially appropriate for male performers) about the musical style of *dhrupad*. Likewise, in a definition of *dhrupad* on the website of the ITC – Sangeet Research Academy (based in Calcutta), the author simply states that *dhrupad* “has a very masculine style and was traditionally performed to the accompaniment of the *pakhawaj* (*mridang*) and the *veena*”, without making clear whether that perceived masculinity is in some way related to its traditional accompanying instruments, or a function of some other feature altogether (*ITC-SRA* accessed 2012). In these instances, commentators appeal to ideas about masculinity in music which they must assume are shared by their readers, in order to convey information about the musical style they are describing. From reading these types of descriptions alone, it is impossible to ascertain what these apparently masculine characteristics might be.

Other commentators, however, have been more explicit about what, precisely, they hear as masculine in *dhrupad*’s musical style. Many hear the typical ornamentation of *dhrupad* as masculine. Often this is characterised in terms of the absence of some of the typical ornaments of other genres. Thus Namita Devidayal, in her obituary of the female *dhrupad* singer Ashgari Bai, writes “*Dhrupad dhamar* is a style of music – made popular by the Dagar brothers – which is sung in slow time, to very specific *taals*, and is usually devoid of embellishment or the flourishes typical of classical music. Indeed, the style is considered ‘masculine’. Yet, Ashgari Bai, a woman, mastered the art” (*Times of India*, August 23rd 1997). Likewise, another reviewer describes a concert by the *dhrupad* singer Wasifuddin Dagar as follows: “He remained true to the basics of the form in maintaining a masculine quality by avoiding ornamental flourishes, graces and shakes. He also desisted from indulging in fanciful improvisation. Each

note was struck individually and the composition was developed in correctness and purity” (Ali 2004). Here, the critic hears Dagar’s avoidance of particular kinds of ornamentation as “maintaining a masculine quality”. This is associated with ideas of restraint, more broadly, when the reviewer, immediately afterwards, gives credit to the performer for not “indulging in fanciful improvisation”. Both of these musical characteristics are then linked with ideas about “correctness” and “purity”. If avoiding ornamentation is considered masculine and also felt to contribute to a sense of restraint and musical purity, one may infer that, for this reviewer at least, masculinity itself is linked with ideas about restraint and purity. This linkage then becomes imprinted in the imaginations of the review’s readers, potentially confirming gendered stereotypes about the relative restraint and fanciful indulgence of men and women respectively.

Widdess and Sanyal note that while *dhrupad* is often characterised as relatively lacking in ornamentation, certain specific types of ornament are nevertheless strongly associated with the genre. (2004: 56) One highly characteristic ornament of *dhrupad* is “*gamak*”; this particular ornament, like *dhrupad*, evokes masculine associations. The reviewer Amarendra Dhaneshwar is critical of this association, writing, “Dhrupad gayaki is considered to be a male preserve because of the wrong notion that ‘gamak’ (patterns which interlink notes in a seamless manner) taans require manly vigour” (*Mumbai Mirror*, December 12th 2010). *Gamak* is often coded as masculine in other contexts, too, for example in a review of a *sitār* concert in 1980, given by Vilayat Khan, in which the reviewer celebrates the “vigorous, masculine *gamaks* typical of his style” (*Times of India*, December 12th 1980).

Gamak also carries other associations, in addition to evoking a sense of masculinity: Widdess and Sanyal draw attention to the rich and complex symbolism that comes into play in relation to this particular ornament. They write that “a fine *gamak* technique is a highly valued accompaniment, and distinguishes the performer as an exponent of the most serious and difficult styles of North Indian vocal music – *dhrupad* and *khyāl* – as opposed to the lighter styles (*thumrī*, *ghazal* etc.) in which *gamak* of this type is not used.” They note, also, that since “*dhrupad* and *khyāl* were traditionally sung by high-status male court musicians (*kalāvānt*), and the lighter styles by courtesans, important social and gender distinctions follow.” As a result of this, they suggest that “*gamak* is thus a sufficiently complex musical device to carry additional symbolic meanings concerning the identity, accomplishment and socio-musical status of the performer and his tradition” (2004: 169). In this case the gendered associations of one musical feature, the ornament *gamak*, overlap with ideas about status and prestige: throughout this chapter, I will demonstrate ways which this is also the case in relation to the musical characteristics of *thumrī* style.

Dhrupad/khyāl as masculine/feminine

Sometimes, commentators assert the masculinity of *dhrupad* while placing it alongside the relatively feminine *khyāl* for comparison. This pairing of dichotomies (masculine/feminine with *dhrupad/khyāl*) has a long history. In 1834, in a description of current musical genres in his *A Treatise on the Music of India*, N. Augustus Willard describes *dhrupad* and *khyāl* in masculine and feminine terms respectively, writing:

The various species of the more modern compositions are the following:

1. The Dhrupad. This may properly be considered as the heroic song of India. The subject is frequently the recital of some of the memorable actions of their heroes, or other didactic theme. It also engrosses love matters, as well as trifling and frivolous subjects. The style is very masculine, and almost entirely devoid of studied ornamental flourishes. Manly negligence and ease seems to pervade the whole, and the few turns that are allowed are always short and peculiar. ...
2. Kheyāl. In the Kheyāl the subject generally is a love tale, and the person supposed to utter it, a female. The style is extremely graceful, and replete with studied elegance and embellishments. ... Although the pathetic is found in almost all species of Indian musical as well as poetical compositions, yet the Kheyāl is perhaps its more immediate sphere. The style of the Dhrupad is too masculine to suit the tender delicacy of female expression, and the Tappa is more comfortable to the character of a maid, who inhabits the shores of the Ravi ... than with the beauties of Hindusthan; while the Ghazals and Rekhtas are quite exotic, transplanted and reared on the Indian soil since the Muhammadan conquest. To a person who understands the language sufficiently, it is enough to hear a few good Kheyāls, to be convinced of the beauties of Indian songs, both with regard to the pathos of the poetry and delicacy of the melody (Willard 2006 [1834]: 67-8).

Here, as in modern-day discussions of *dhrupad*, the masculinity of the genre is heard in *dhrupad* musicians' avoidance of particular kinds of ornamentation ("studied ornamental flourishes") and their sparing use of other ornaments, only heard in *dhrupad*. *Khyāl* meanwhile is described in specifically feminine terms and as being "replete with ... embellishments". In their discussion of this passage, Widdess and Sanyal suggest that here, "for possibly the first time in the historical record the concept emerges of *dhrupad* as a style, rigorously distinguished from other styles by its use of certain ornamental techniques and the avoidance of those characterizing other styles." They also draw attention to the emphasis Willard places on the texts of *dhrupad* and *khyāl* in producing their gendered characteristics, noting that the "stylistic distinction [between *dhrupad* and *khyāl*] is part of a larger aesthetic distinction, expressed in terms of the 'masculine' and 'feminine' ethos of *dhrupad* and *khyāl* respectively, and rooted in the texts of the compositions" (2004: 57). Elsewhere, they point out that this musical and textual distinction persists in modern-day understandings of the genre. They write that "[the] predominant mood [of *dhrupad* texts] is of praise or supplication, and the 'speaker' is normally male", contrasting with the texts of *khyāl* and *thumrī*, whose texts often "concern the intimate reflections of lovers in union or separation" and whose 'speaker' is usually female. As a result, they suggest, "Though no doubt

an over-simplification, both the musical styles and the poetry of *dhrupad* and *khyāl* can be broadly characterized as masculine, extrovert and rhetorical on the one hand, feminine, introspective and intimate on the other” (2004: 13).

Discussing other historical precedents of the contemporary gendered distinction between *dhrupad* and *khyāl*, Widdess and Sanyal also mention an anecdote from musicians’ oral histories concerning a dispute between the *dhrupad* singer Bahrām Khān and the *khyāl* singer Mubārak Alī Khān. This story is also cited by Dard Neuman, who translates the story as recounted by Vilayat Hussein Khan. Here, again, the ornament *gamak* is mentioned as a musical signifier of masculinity:

One time in Jaipur, where knowledgeable musicians were all together ... musical gatherings used to take place in Rajab Ali Khan beenkar’s house. In one such gathering there were about ten to twelve famous musicians assembled together. ... Behram Khan started making fun of the Khayal singers. He said that khayal singing was feminine and dhrupad was masculine and brave... Mubarak Ali Khan had an immediate rebuttal and said, “Bade Miyan, our song is not what you think. Now get hold of yourself!” Saying this he sang a powerful jabardast taan with gamak. All the four legs of the bed broke with it and all the men seated on it fell and got trapped like a pigeon gets trapped in a net. ... For many years people remembered this incident (Neuman 2004: 39).

In his book, *Hindustani Music in the 20th Century*, Wim van der Meer examines some of the musical characteristics of *dhrupad* and *khyāl*, arguing that “The comparison of *dhrupada* and *khayāl* has indicated certain differences which show that *khayāl* has emerged to be sung by women” (1980: 59). Amongst other things, he draws attention to “the fact that the *tablā* is much softer and more delicate in sound” than the *pakhāvāj*, which “indicates again that it is more suitable as an accompaniment to female voices” (56); the greater emphasis in *dhrupad* on rhythmic variation than in *khyāl* (56); the use in *khyāl* and avoidance in *dhrupad* of the ornament *murkī*, which, he feels, “suits a thin voice (especially female) much better than a sonorous (male) voice” (53); the fact that *khyāl* texts imply a female speaker, while *dhrupad*’s imply a male one or else give no clue as to the gender of the speaker (56-57); and his general impression that *khyāl* “suits the female voice much better than the *dhrupada*” (57). He suggests that “there is a broad distinction in classical Hindustani music between male – *bīna* – *pakhāvāj* (*dhrupad*) on the one hand and female - *sāra gī* – *tablā* (*khayāl*) on the other” (57). Based on these observations, he suggests that *khyāl* “emerged precisely as a female counterpart to *dhrupada*” (57), which “enabled the courtesans to sing more solemn *rāgas*”, previously reserved for *dhrupad* (58).

In her book, *Some Immortals of Hindustani Music*, Susheela Misra tells a similar story. She explains the origin of *khyāl* as a result of the fact that *dhrupad* was “a thoroughly masculine type of music,” therefore “talented women-artistes must have been yearning for a style more suitable for their feminine temperament and voices” (1990:39) Likewise on his website the *tabla*

player David Courtney explains what he hears as the greater “delicacy” in *khyāl* than in *dhrupad* with reference to gender, by suggesting that physical architecture “played a surprising role in [their] development”. He proposes that since male performers “commonly sang in the royal courts” and “had to deal with very reverberant environments”, then “the masculine forms (e.g., *dhrupad*, *dhammar*) became very loud and devoid of delicacy”, and “any attempt to sing very fast material would simply be washed out in the echoes of the *darbar*.” On the other hand, he argues, “The *kheyāl* was sung in much smaller women's quarters so there was not the necessity to sing so loudly”, with the result that “the *kheyāl* was able to develop much more delicacy” and “women singing in the smaller *zanaanas* could explore the full range from slow to fast material” (Courtney accessed 2012).

Although the gendered distinction between *dhrupad* and *khyāl* has a long history, these origin stories are at odds with the evidence of contemporary historical sources (Brown 2010); nevertheless they reveal important aspects of the way modern-day musicians and listeners formulate the gendered distinction between *dhrupad* and *khyāl* and read it into aspects of musical history.

Gendered styles of dhrupad and khyāl

Discussions of the masculinity and/or femininity of *dhrupad* and *khyāl* do not only deal with the gendered characterisation of each genre; gendered language also appears in descriptions of the different stylistic traits of individual musicians and pedagogical lineages. Widdess and Sanyal note, for example, that exponents of the Dagar style of *dhrupad* consider their style to be “balanced”, describing the characteristics to be balanced in gendered terms, such that masculinity is equated with “vigour” and a “forceful and open tone”, while femininity is equated with “sweetness”, “gracefulness” and “affection” (2004: 125-126). This linking of attributes in the labelling of musical characteristics reveals and reinforces aspects of particular social constructions of gender, in which men are perceived as vigorous and forceful while women are sweet, graceful and affectionate.

In *khyāl*, meanwhile, there is a widespread belief that the Agra *gharānā* in particular has a masculine style. In a book on *khyāl* styles, the music connoisseur Deepak Raja attributes the common description of the style of this *gharānā* as masculine to its “full-throated and aggressive vocalization”, which he suggests is “inspired by some streams of *dhrupada* vocalism”, its “bias towards staccato intonation”, its “marked angularity of melodic contours” and the fact that “Agra vocalists tend to deploy the bolder forms of melodic execution from the *dhrupada* genre, such as *gitkiri*, *khatka* and *gamaka* to the near-exclusion of delicate ornamentations such as *murki* and *kan*, more frequently found in the *khyāla* vocalism of other lineages” (2009: 29). In her book on *khyāl*, Bonnie Wade also cites a number of sources who

describe the Agra *gharānā* as masculine, noting also that the crucial, defining characteristic of the Agra *gharānā* is that “the *khyāl* style has been kept close to *dhrupad*” (1984: 102). Here, the appropriation of stylistic features from a masculine genre brings with it connotations of masculinity, even when those features are used in the context of a different genre.

Ideas about the masculinity of the Agra *gharānā* inform the way in which reviewers judge female vocalists who attempt to sing in this style. In a review written in 1989, a music critic criticises the singer Arati Ankalikar-Tikekar for departing from her previous Jaipur-*gharānā* style by including elements more typical of the Agra *gharānā*. The reviewer feels that this “does not match her feminine voice” and that she “sounds a bit rough and rugged as a result” (*Times of India*, July 22nd 1989). Here the reviewer judges a female singer harshly for unsuccessfully attempting to incorporate into her own style elements of a specifically masculine idiom. This is coupled with a criticism of her blurring of stylistic distinctions; in a typical display of suspicion towards singers who have trained in more than one *gharānā*, the reviewer describes her style as “a little from here, a little from there”, writing that “she is neither in Jaipur nor in Agra”.

Since the perceived masculinity of the Agra *gharānā* threatens to expose its female exponents to criticism, these female singers must find ways of negotiating the conflicting social pressures both to sing in a way that is heard as appropriate for women (and female voices) and also not to deviate too far from the typical style of their *gharānā*. On the website of the vocalist Shubhra Guha, her biography celebrates the multi-faceted nature of her *khyāl* style, combining both masculine and feminine elements: “Though belonging to the Agra Gharana, which is synonymous with the prowess and masculinity of Aftab-e-Mousiqui Ustad Faiyaz Khan, what makes Guha's rendition style uniquely different is her mature juxtaposition of her feminine charm with masculine grandeur that's inherent in the Gharana” (Guha accessed 2012).

I spoke with her about this when I interviewed her. She said that the masculinity of the Agra *gharānā* was a consequence of the typical way in which singers “produce the voice”. She demonstrated this to me, singing a couple of phrases that were low in pitch and which used the typical “*nom tom*” syllables of *dhrupad*. She then said that this is something “which I do not do, because I am a woman”. When I asked precisely what it is that she does not do, she mentioned the ornament *gamak*, saying that it comes from the stomach and that “it matches a man”, but not a woman’s voice. An association between masculinity and the impression that the voice is coming from a singers’ stomach also appears in Bonnie Wade’s description of the style of the *khyāl* singer Gangubai Hangal (Wade 1984: 199).

I also discussed the gendering of *khyāl* style in an interview with the Jaipur-*gharānā* *khyāl* singer Rajshekhar Mansur. He expressed the opinion that it is not different *gharānās* which are masculine or feminine in character, but rather different *rāgs*. He suggested that “certain *rāgas* ...

require a lot of aggressive singing”. As an example of this, he drew attention in particular to *rāg Dārbāri*, which he described as a “huge *rāga*”. He believes that “most women cannot do justice to some of these male-oriented *rāgas* because their [voices are] always on the trill, on the niceties of the *rāgas*” and are “not broad enough”. He feels that while “the lighter *rāgas* are more suited to women”, “the heavier *rāgas* are not suited to them” and that when women attempt to sing “heavier” *rāgs*, the effect is “not that impressive”.

Khyāl's shifting identity

Khyāl is not always thought of as a feminine genre in North Indian classical music. Lalita du Perron notes that “in a gendered discussion restricted to only these [*dhrupad* and *khyāl*], *dhrupad* tends to be conceptualized as masculine whereas *khyāl* may be cloaked in a feminine garb, its ornateness juxtaposed to *dhrupad*'s austerity.” However, she writes, “When discussed in relation to *thumrī*'s perceived femininity, ... *khyāl* can once again assume a masculine and serious role” (2002: 173-4). Thus the *thumrī* singer Rekha Surya formulates a gendered distinction between *thumrī* and *khyāl*, in which *khyāl* acts as the “abstract” and “austere” counterpart to a more “feminine” genre, thereby taking on the role that *dhrupad* plays when considered alongside *khyāl*: “Thumri is liberal and feminine in temperament while Khayal is abstract and austere in nature, using a bandish primarily as a peg to hang notes on” (Vajpayi 2008). Likewise, in his review of a seminar on *thumrī* in 1987, Mohan Nadkarni writes, “All said and done, most of use came away after the seminar with nostalgic memories of a bygone age, when *thumri* was the queen of Hindustani music, while *khayal* was the king” (*Times of India*, January 24th 1987). Similarly the semi-classical singer Shanti Hiranand writes that “the traditional belief used to be that *thumri* singing comes second only to *khayal gayaki*, that “if *khayal* is the king, then *thumri* is rightfully the queen” of traditional Indian singing” (2005:109). Another review describes *thumrī* as “like the female face of khayal” (*The Statesman*, 17th March 2011).

In an advertisement for a concert given in 2008 by Bireshwar Gautam, *khyāl* and *dhrupad* are grouped together so that they both take on connotations of masculinity when juxtaposed with *thumrī*: “Thumri ... is the feminine style compared with the masculine khyal and dhrupad.” Meena Banerjee, meanwhile, describes *khyāl* as the middle ground between the masculine *dhrupad* and feminine *thumrī*. In her description, *khyāl* can take on aspects of both genders. “Dhrupad and thumri, according to some ustads, are essential idioms for total grooming of a khayal exponent because dhrupad unravels the mystery of a raga through its powerful, direct, masculine approach replete with rhythmic variants, while thumri, with feminine touches, adds different hues of emotions to the raga's persona” (*The Statesman*, 15th April 2011). M.R. Gautam expresses a similar sentiment, although not in explicitly gendered terms. He writes that

“while the *dhruvapada* was a purely classical form, the *khyāl* was a classico-romantic form incorporating the classicism of the *dhruvapada* and the romanticism of the *thumrī*” (2001: 42).

Thumrī and femininity in North Indian classical music

Even when it is not considered alongside *khyāl* or *dhrupad*, *thumrī* nevertheless evokes strongly feminine associations. In the obituary of the male shehnai player Bismillah Khan, he is praised for having “understood the inner working of the fundamentally feminine form of the thumri and incorporated its most captivating and difficult features into his shehnai playing” (*The Hindu*, 26th August 2006). Similarly, in a description of *thumrī* in his book, *Dance in Thumri*, Projesh Banerjee states that the genre “possesses some of the essential charms of classical music”, but that they are “feminine in touch” (1986: 30).

This perceived femininity is partly due to the genre’s historical association with courtesans and the fact that the majority of *thumrī*’s foremost exponents have been women, including both performers who hail from a courtesan background and those who do not. Note, for example, the sense of nostalgia for *thumrī*’s former performers (and the records they famously recorded) in this review of a concert given in 2003. Here a male singer, simply by singing a *thumrī*, conjures up images of women in the reviewer’s imagination:

Pandit Jagdish Prasad then took on a thumri penned by Khansaheb himself. ‘Saiyyan bolo’ in Raag Piloo is a wistfully romantic composition. Though the possibilities of the form are rather limited, his varied and richly expressive style took the listener back in times. It was as if one was listening from an old LP, off a gramophone horn. An entire gamut of emotions — a beloved’s pining, coaxing, pleading... a woman’s role: a mother, the beloved, courtesan... (*The Hindu*, 20th March 2003).

This particular review is a manifestation of what I labelled in Chapter 4 the “Golden Age discourse” about North Indian classical music. When it is applied to *thumrī*, this discourse often takes on a gendered significance. For many music-lovers, listening to *thumrī* evokes images of courtesans in nineteenth-century Lucknow, as part of nostalgic fantasies about the imagined origins of the genre. For one reviewer, writing in the *Times of India* in 1963 about a record recently released by Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, listening to *thumrī* recordings is reminiscent of the “twilight” of Mughal rule in India, a time in which “singers and dancers [were] in the centre of social interest and even ... official royal favourites” and in which “erotic Urdu poetry and an equally erotic tradition of Indian music and dance [were] in fashion”. He states that the appearance of Radha and Krishna in musical lyrics at this time (and by extension in *thumrī*’s original, authentic form) occurred “not as a great euphoric exaltation of the spirit” (as in the devotional interpretation of *thumrī* I discussed in the last chapter), but rather “in a spirit of romantic sentimentality”. He writes, “The undressed girls swooning on terraces under the stars

whom we meet in the Moghul miniatures of the provincial school of Oudh were self-conscious, accessible beauties, not emblems of transcendent passion”, continuing, “The Thumri also belongs to this mood, for it is a love-poem flavoured with the slightly overripe scents of autumn” (21st July 1963). For this commentator, a performance on a record by a famous male vocalist in the 1960s evokes vivid images of “undressed”, “swooning” girls of the Mughal era. In this description, *thumrī*’s strong association with female performers in the past (even when it is sung by men) creates a link between the genre and a particularly sensuous kind of femininity, contributing to the genre’s romantic or erotic musical ethos.

In his biography of the classical singer Bhimsen Joshi, Mohan Nadkarni remarks that the romantic aesthetic of *thumrī* renders it more appropriate for female singers than male:

Each of these song-forms [thumri, ghazal and dadra] expresses a vital poetic tradition with a charm and defiance all its own. Flexible in form and lyrical in content, they offer ample scope for expressing the subtlest nuances of emotion. Sensuous romanticism is, in fact, the very essence of these forms, and the renditions call for a great deal of talent and skill on the singer’s part to depict their lyrical fineries and musical beauty. Not for nothing were thumri, ghazal and dadra once the exclusive preserve of female singers, to whose voice and temperament these forms suited naturally (Nadkarni 1994:82-3).

The association between *thumrī* and female performers, however, is not as strong as that between *dhrupad* and male ones. Many well-known twentieth-century *thumrī* singers have been men. When I asked them why *thumrī* is often described as “feminine”, some singers whom I interviewed insisted that *thumrī* is not a feminine genre at all, since it can be sung by men as well as by women.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, women are far better represented amongst well-known *thumrī* singers than amongst well-known *khyāl* or *dhrupad* singers and the vast majority of musicians and listeners associate *thumrī* with female singers, particularly when they consider the genre’s past.

Even without making any explicit references to courtesans or female performers, many commentators draw a link between *thumrī*’s femininity and what they consider to be its erotic mood. The musicologist Ashok Ranade, for example, notes the “gentle and feminine eroticism” (2006: 134) of the genre. In his book, *The Musical Heritage of India* (2001), M. R. Gautam, writes that “The predominant theme of the *thumrī* is erotic fantasy, with all its twists and turns and shifting panorama of colour.” He expands on this idea later, writing of *thumrī* performances that “Eroticism and love released themselves in feminine sense and sensibility, in feminine delicacy and fury, with all the attendant spasmodic twists of the wrist, of the waist, jinglings of the *ghumgharū*, cracking of the bangles and the jerky pulling of the garments.” Here, Gautam’s

⁴⁷ In the context of the complex social issues facing musicians which I discussed in the last chapter, this instance can be viewed as part of a social strategy to distance *thumrī* from its historical association with the courtesan tradition.

mention of dance in relation to the modern-day, sung form of *thumrī* evokes nostalgia for the courtesans who both sang and danced the genre, even though he does not mention them by name. In his view, *thumrī*'s erotic aesthetic is the justification for what he perceives to be the genre's freedom from musical constraints, relative to classical genres. He writes, "There is no rule, regulation or law in rendering except unrestricted wooing" and, elsewhere, "No taboos and restraints are respected" (50).

Some commentators draw less explicit links between *thumrī*, an erotic or romantic mood and a sensuous femininity. In 1961, for example, one reviewer describes a semi-classical concert by Begum Akhtar as follows: "Begum Akhtar's *thumri* and *dadra* were charmingly sung. Now subtle and sophisticated, and now sensuous and warm, these pieces, in the totality of effect, were as intriguing as they were exhilarating" (*Times of India*, 8th March 1961). Although the reviewer here is talking only about one particular performance and the style of one particular singer, this review nevertheless reinforces a more general association between sensuous singing and semi-classical genres. Such a description would be unthinkable, for example, in a review of a *dhrupad* recital. Likewise a week earlier the same publication contained a review of a concert by the semi-classical specialist Nirmala Devi. The reviewer describes her voice as "sweet, soft and mellifluous" and also "husky, sensuous and full of pathos and melodious charm". Here, qualities often associated with *thumrī* (such as sensuousness) are heard in the voice of one particular performer (*Times of India*, 2nd March 1961). In these cases, the sense of eroticism associated with the female performers of *thumrī* also contributes to the cultural construction of femininity itself as sensuous and the conflation of femininity with ideas of romance and eroticism.

References to gender also regularly appear in discussions of the kinds of ornamentation commonly used in *thumrī*. Ashok Ranade, in his *Music Contexts: A Concise Dictionary of Hindustani Music* (2006), writes the following about *thumrī*: "Generally speaking, musical embellishments such as the following predominantly figure in presentation of the genre: *Kaku*, *murki*, *khatka*, *jhatka*, *meend*, *dard* and *pukar*. These embellishments clearly indicate decorative, tender and delicate elements in musical expression. It is no wonder that the genre was often and rather mockingly described as *janani* (feminine)" (137).

Amongst musicians and scholars, there are numerous differences of opinion about the precise definitions of particular ornaments and about the genres in which they ought to occur. Note that this list contains the ornament "*khatka*", which also appears in Deepak Raja's list of ornaments that he associates with *dhrupad* and Agra-gharānā *khyāl* style. "*Dard*" meaning "pain" is, in a musical context, normally considered to denote an expressive quality, rather than any particular, definable ornament. That Ranade compiles such a long (and occasionally controversial) list of ornamentation in his description of *thumrī* is indicative of a more widespread view that *thumrī*

is, as Deepak Raja puts it, an “ornamentation-dominant” genre (2009: 260), characterised not only by particular types of ornament but also by the fact that it uses more ornaments than other genres. Despite the lack of consensus amongst musicians around the precise definitions of ornaments and the genres in which they occur, most agree that the ornament which most characterises *ṭhumrī* is *murkī* and that this ornament involves the delicate, fast use either of what in Western classical terminology would be called “mordents” (Manuel 1989:123), which trace the pitch contour 212 or 121 (which could be realised as ^{PM}P, ^{DN}D, ^N and so on) or else figures which encircle a central pitch, for example in the contours 2132 (^N , for example), 21321 (^N ^N) and 23212 (^{GMGR}G).

When I interviewed Shubhra Guha, as well as discussing the apparent masculinity of the Agra *gharānā* (discussed above), we also spoke about the perceived femininity of *ṭhumrī*. She offered a number of reasons for this, suggesting that it was a result of the nature of “the production of voice and the lyrics”, the fact that “there is no use of *gamak*” and “the feminine touch”. She also drew attention to musicians’ use of the ornament *murkī* in *ṭhumrī*, which she described as “more or less feminine” and “a little delicate and soft”. She then demonstrated how the use of *murkī* differentiates *ṭhumrī* from other genres. First, as shown in figure 5.1, she sang two short phrases, which she told me were typical of the way in which *murkī* is used in *ṭhumrī*. Then, she sang two phrases with a similar melodic outline to those in figure 5.1, but using far fewer ornaments. These are transcribed in figure 5.2. She described these as how she would sing if she were singing *dhrupad*. Finally, she sang another version of this melodic outline, again singing with *murkī* so as to demonstrate *ṭhumrī* style (figure 5.3).

Figure 5.1, *ṭhumrī* and *murkī* demonstration by Shubhra Guha.

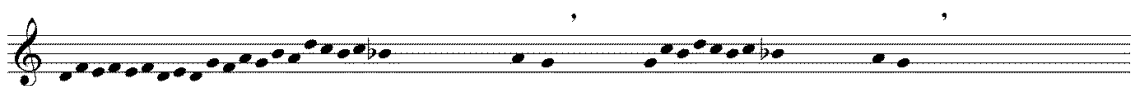


Figure 5.2, *dhrupad* demonstration by Shubhra Guha.

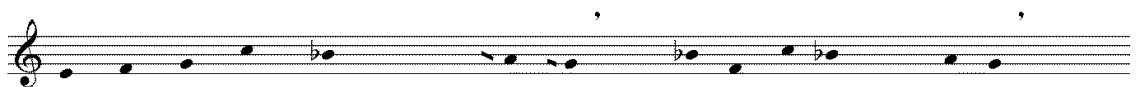
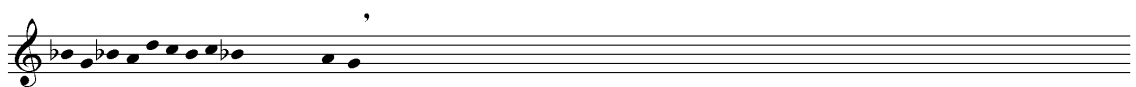


Figure 5.3, *ṭhumrī* and *murkī* demonstration by Shubhra Guha.



In the first phrase shown in figure 5.1, her demonstration of *murkī* is characterised by a complex, twisting ornamental strategy. Instead of moving directly up the scale, as she does in her *dhrupad* demonstration (shown in figure 5.2), she traces a zig-zag, turning pattern, rising

overall in pitch and then circling with the figure \underline{N} , before finally settling on \underline{N} . The second phrase in figure 5.1 is a condensed version of this: here it included an extended version of the circling figure around \underline{N} , this time consisting of the pitches $\underline{N} \underline{N}$. Her second *thumrī* demonstration, shown in figure 5.3, again includes a circling figure around \underline{N} , again using the pitches \underline{N} .

In her recorded *thumrī* performances, Guha makes heavy use of these kinds of circling ornaments. Figure 5.4, an extract from Guha's performance of the *thumrī* “*Jāvo piyā tuma jāvo*”, is a typical example. Note the way she circles the central pitch P in K: 2 and K: 4, using the pitches $\underline{P} \underline{M} \underline{D} \underline{P} \underline{M} \underline{P}$ to set the lyrics “*tuma*”. This particular combination of pitches occurs again in L: 3, as a quick ornament in the middle of the word “*jāvo*” and other circling and mordent-like ornaments occur throughout this passage, for example in L: 2 (RS^S or MP^M) and L: 4 (S).

Figure 5.4, extract from Guha (1999), *thumrī* in *rāg miśra Khamāj*, 05:04 to 05:52.

Tāl = 16-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ D. See CD 2, track 31.

The musical score consists of four staves. The first staff has the lyrics "pi - yā tu - ma jā - vo pi - yā tu - ma jā - vo pi - yā". The second staff has the lyrics "re pi - yā pi - yā tu - ma". The third staff has the lyrics "jā - - - vo jā - - - vo". The fourth staff has the lyrics "jā - vo jā - vo pi - yā tu ma jā - - - vo". The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, ornaments, and a 'M' mark.

In terms of its associations, *murkī* is diametrically opposed to *gamak*: while *gamak* is a quintessentially masculine ornament and associated primarily with *dhrupad*, *murkī* is associated with *thumrī* and femininity. On the website of the ITC- Sangeet Research Academy, in a section devoted to the description of different ornaments, the paragraph on *murkī* states that “although some special murkis are used in khayal singing, it is really a very handy device for a thumri singer.” The description continues, “the bols of a thumri, the ragas they are normally set to and the mood of this form of singing especially demand the usage of murkis.” Here, a *murkī* is defined as a “cluster of notes” or a “series of such short clusters”. However, the author writes that the particular pitch combinations used in *murkī* could be the same as those used in the ornaments *khatka* or *zamzama*. What distinguishes *murkī*, here, is its “force of delivery”, where

murkī is softer and less forceful than those other ornaments (ITC-SRA accessed 2012). This is in line with Guha's description of *murkī* as "a little delicate and soft".

Alongside its description of different ornaments, the ITC-SRA website also contains audio demonstrations of them. In the case of *murkī*, the singer is Ajay Chakraborty. In his first demonstration of *murkī*, he slows down and sings with *sārgam* the figures he suggests constitute *murkī*, in order to make explicit the pitches he is singing. (These include some demonstrations almost identical to Guha's in which he sings the pitches PDN^N NDP as well as a series of mordent-like figures using the pitches ^{GR}G ^{PG}P M ^{GR}G and a longer series of both mordent-like and circling figures, including the following succession of pitches: G ^{PD}P ^{GP}P ^{DN}D ^N NDN ^{DN}D ^{DP}M ^{PD}P ^{MG}M G.) For the same of comparison, he also sings some of the same combinations of pitches in a more forceful way, as a way of demonstrating how those particular pitches will not always constitute instances of *murkī* if delivered too forcefully.

Just as the gendering of *gamak* as masculine links masculinity with ideas about strength and vigour, so the characterisation of *murkī* as both delicate and feminine also plays into the notion that femininity itself is characterised by delicacy. This is significant in terms of gender stereotypes and is linked with the idea that women and women's genre should be soft and delicate, while men and men's genres can be more forceful and aggressive. Furthermore it is important for Ajoy Chakraborty, in particular, to define *murkī* by its force of delivery rather than just pitches, because of the heavily ornamented nature of his *khyāl* style. Shubhra Guha can afford to define *murkī* solely in terms of the scale degrees it uses, because her Agra-*gharānā* *khyāl* style makes only sparse use of note clusters such as these. In the Patiala *gharānā* (associated with the *Pa jāb ā g* of *ṭhumrī*), however, heavy ornamentation is an important marker of stylistic identity in both *ṭhumrī* and *khyāl*. Ajoy Chakraborty's insistence on a difference between *murkī* in *ṭhumrī* and other, similar ornaments in *khyāl* may be at least in part informed by the social pressure to prevent blurring between genres (discussed in the last chapter), as an attempt to mitigate potential criticism of his *khyāl* style.

This use of florid, *murkī*-like ornamentation in *khyāl* renders its performers vulnerable to criticism, often formulated in gendered terms. In his book, *The Lost World of Hindustani Music*, for example, the music connoisseur Kumar Prasad Mukherji writes disparagingly of those *khyāl* singers whose use of ornamentation displays the influence of *ṭhumrī* and *ghazal*. He writes, "Khayal gayaki, of course, has been changing, as it must over the years, but my elders were lucky to have missed the invasion of Punjabi harkats and murkees from the bazaars of Lahore and Peshawar, reserved earlier for their brand of thumris and ghazals by petty tawayefs" (Mukherji 2006: 68). Here, "harkats and murkees" are explicitly associated not only with a Punjabi style, with "thumris and ghazals" and with female performers but specifically with disreputable, "petty" courtesans who dwell in "bazaars".

As well as singers of the Patiala *gharānā* and the *Pa jāb ā g* of *ṭhumrī*, Begum Akhtar is often also celebrated for her subtle and specifically semi-classical use of ornamentation, sometimes attributed to the influence of the Patiala *gharānā*. In her biography, her student Shanti Hiranand describes Akhtar's training with the Patiala *gharānā* vocalist Ata Mohammed Khan, writing that his influence was "the reason that the *harkats* and *murkis*, which are popular in the Patiala style of singing, were very clearly evident in her music" (2005: 107). Hiranand also notes the particular appropriateness of florid embellishment to *ṭhumrī* style. She writes of her admiration for another of Akhtar's students, who "had a voice that was rich and full of quivers and movements". Describing these as "essential embellishments in the *thumri* style of singing", she writes regretfully that she herself had "had a flatish voice" and therefore "had to practice for days to achieve the same kind of results" (2005: 36).

Figure 5.5 shows an extract from a *ṭhumrī* performance by Akhtar (2005), typical of her florid ornamental style. Often, her melodic line shows no decisive sense of direction, but quickly twists and turns back on itself in subtle ornamental flourishes. Note, for example, the direction of her melody in A: 2. She commences the *vibhāg* resting on P. The overall movement of the melody here will take her down to G. The melodic line, however, is far more complex than a simple move down through two scale degrees. She starts with a very brief, barely audible turn around P, consisting of the pitches M and D, before again resting on P. Then she sings another turning figure, this time quickly tracing outline GRS_G, resting on the final G. Then, she sings yet another turn, now quickly singing MPDPMG; again, this does not serve to move the melodic line anywhere new, but rather returns at the end to G, the same pitch from which it started. Similarly subtle and quick ornaments occur throughout the passage transcribed in figure 5.5 and continue throughout the rest of this performance.

Figure 5.5, extract from Akhtar (2005), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Khamāj*, 0:25 to 1:14.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A#. See CD 2, track 32.

A

de - - s nā jā nā

B

jā bā-la ma pa - ra - des nā jā

C

nā jā nā jā bā-la-ma pa ra - des

Figure 5.6 also shows a passage typical of Akhtar’s approach to ornamentation. Note, for example, the way she embellishes the *mukhrā* in F: 4. The basic, recurring constituents of the *mukhrā* in this *ṭhumrī* are a stepwise ascent from P to setting the text “*mita-*”, the two-note falling figure D-P setting the text “*-va*”, and then the figure $\underline{\text{GRMMP}}$ to set the text “*mane nare*”, such that the final syllable occurs on the *sam*. This is shown in figure 5.7. In F: 4 (figure 5.6), however, this is embellished with similar kinds of turning ornamentation as occurred in the extract shown in figure 5.5. After initially ascending to , she does not move straight to D, but adds in an extra few notes which trace the outline -D- -S. This outline, too, is embellished further with quick ornamental touches, so as to produce the figure $\overset{\text{N}}{\text{D}} \overset{\text{SN}}{\text{N}}$. Further embellishment occurs later, including the very fast figure DPMPM in between the syllable “*va*” and the syllable “*ma*”. She sings heavily ornamented versions of the *mukhrā* repeatedly in this performance, displaying the subtlety and originality with which she is able to use ornamentation to vary a single melodic outline. Note also the oscillating figure at F:4 in which $\underline{\text{G}}$ alternates with an ornamental M: this sort of oscillation between a longer-held lower pitch and a shorter ornament one scale degree higher is a typical hallmark of Begum Akhtar’s style.

Figure 5.6, extract from Akhtar (1990), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Kāfī*, 2:25 to 3:10.

Tāl = 14-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A#. See CD 2, track 33.

Figure 5.6 shows a musical extract from Akhtar (1990), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Kāfī*, spanning from 2:25 to 3:10. The notation is in 14-beat *dīpcandī* *Tāl*. The original pitch is *Sa* ~ A#. The extract features several staves of music with various ornaments and rhythmic patterns. The lyrics are: na ma - ne na mi - ta - va ma - ne na - re ma - ne na mi - ta - va ma mi - ta - va ma - ne na - re.

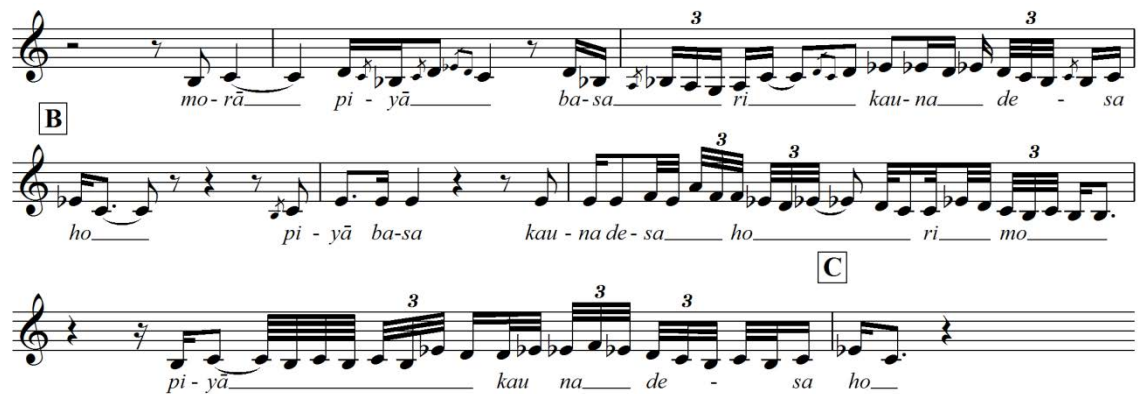
Figure 5.7, *mukhrā* schema for Akhtar (1990), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Kāfī*.

Figure 5.7 shows the *mukhrā* schema for Akhtar (1990), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg Kāfī*. The notation is in 14-beat *dīpcandī* *Tāl*. The original pitch is *Sa* ~ A#. The schema features a single staff of music with various ornaments and rhythmic patterns. The lyrics are: mi - ta - va ma - ne na - re.

Despite discussing her difficulty in replicating Akhtar's ornamentation while still a student, Hiranand's adult performances nevertheless also the display quick, subtle, barely audible turns that are typical of Akhtar's *thumrī* style, although Hiranand uses them less frequently than Akhtar. Figure 5.8 shows an extract from a performance by Hiranand.

Figure 5.8, extract from Hiranand (2001), *thumrī* in *rāg Pīlū*, 1:15 to 2:00.

Tāl = 16-beat *dīpcandī*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ C#. See CD 2, track 34.



Some critics see a tension between the heavy use of delicate ornamentation in *thumrī* and what they consider to be the importance of emotional expression in the genre. In his book, *The Musical Heritage of India*, M. R. Gautam notes the existence of different *thumrī* styles, writing that “the homes of *thumrī* are Lucknow and Banaras”. He also briefly mentions a “third style [which] has come into prominence in the last twenty-five years, the Punjabi style”. He dismisses this style of *thumrī*, writing, “I have decided not to go into this style because, apart from exhibiting dexterity in taking intricate, odd combinations of notes – very often in chromatic sequence – its capacity for sustained and deep emotional expression is rather poor” (2001: 51). In this description, the typical florid ornamentation of *Pa jāb a g thumrī* is seen to be at odds with the “deep emotional expression” that Gautam feels is a crucial, defining characteristic of *thumrī*.

This perceived tension between ornamentation and emotion also informs the following review of a semi-classical singer Lakshmi Shankar, where it is explicitly attributed to the *Pa jāb a g* “accent” of her *thumrī* style: “The tantalising Punjabi accent was very much in evidence in Lakshmi Shankar’s *thumris*. Her sweet and finely nuanced voice lent rare charm to her interpretation of these light classical pieces. Yet, I wish the artist cared more for the subtlety of feeling than the mere delicacy of accent in her singing. After all, it is sensitivity and deep feeling that embody the quintessence of *thumri* and light classical varieties” (*Times of India*, 26th June 2002). As a discussion of Lakshmi Shankar, this review is anomalous; the majority of reviews of concerts by Lakshmi Shankar do not fault her for any lack of emotion in her *thumrī* performances. However this review is nevertheless significant in that it is a manifestation of a

more widespread feeling amongst musicians and music-lovers that heavy ornamentation and emotion in music are mutually exclusive.

In the case of *thumrī* I would like to suggest that this perceived tension is also a tension between two different types of femininity. While discussions of the femininity of *murkī* and *thumrī*'s characteristic ornamentation tend to emphasise softness, subtlety and delicacy, discussions of *thumrī*'s emotional character imply no such musical restraint. Rather when musicians celebrate emotional expression in *thumrī*, for example as manifested in singers' use of *pukār*, they are far more likely to speak about this in terms of an unrestrained emotional outpouring than in terms of subtle nuances. These ideas play into two very different aspects of stereotypical femininity: while the former implies feminine softness and restraint, the latter involves the uninhibited expression of powerful emotions. Each model of femininity has very different musical consequences. This may be heard by comparing, for example, the extrovert emotional outpouring of *thumrīs* by Rasoolan Bai with the soft and subtly ornamented nature of *thumrīs* by Begum Akhtar or Shanti Hiranand.

It is not only in *thumrī* singers' use of ornamentation that commentators hear a feminine delicacy: they sometimes also hear this in the quality of their voices, particularly in their perceived "sweetness". In a newspaper article published in 1968, Gurudev Sharan offers an explanation for the fact that "*thumri* was once the exclusive preserve of female singers": he writes, "It is conventionally described as a style *par excellence* for women, as it lends itself naturally to their temperamental make-up and relatively sweeter voice" (*Times of India*, March 3rd 1968). Femininity may be equated with sweetness even in discussions of the voice of a male singer. In a review of a concert by the male semi-classical specialist Kamal Singh, one reviewer writes, "Keen on vocal music from the tender age of five, he studied under Ustad Vilas Khan. But before long, his teacher had discovered that fate had bestowed on young Kamal a sweet, almost feminine voice, that was just what was required for *thumri* and *dadra*. So off Kamal went to Banaras where he spent some ten years..." (*Times of India*, September 20th 1953). Seven years later in the same publication, a reviewer described Kamal Singh's voice as "rather unusual for a male-singer" and criticised his "persistent tendency to make excessive use of soft and delicate notes" (*Times of India*, October 1st 1960). Another three years later, the following description appears in a review of another of his concerts: "If ... the music of young Kamal Singh carries a tremendous appeal with the not-so-high-brow votaries of the art, it is largely because this popular vocalist, with his dainty tones and pleasant timbres, is able to achieve an acceptable blend of lyricism and sensuous charm to a remarkable degree" (*Times of India*, October 16th 1963). Unlike in the previous two reviews, here there is no explicit mention of gender in relation to Kamal Singh's voice. However this critic nevertheless describes his

performance in terms frequently associated with femininity in *ṭhumrī*, using language such as “dainty tones” and “sensuous charm”.

In her article, “Ṭhumrī: A Discussion of the Female Voice of Hindustani Music”, Perron discusses ways in which the sense of femininity associated with *ṭhumrī* might be related to the protagonist of *ṭhumrī*’s lyrics. She notes a number of factors that contribute to *ṭhumrī*’s “association with femininity”, including “the relatively relaxed approach to musical grammar, the association with folk song, musical and textual emotionalism, romanticity and accessibility, ... the fact that *ṭhumrī*’s traditional performers were songstress-courtesans (*tavāyafs*)” (2002: 174), and also “its romantic mood” (175). However, she argues that the primary reason for this gendered association is that *ṭhumrī*’s texts almost always imply a first-person, female heroine (173). This first-person female narrator is of greater significance in *ṭhumrī* than in *khyāl*, whose texts are very similar and sometimes even identical to *ṭhumrī*’s, because of the greater importance placed on conveying the lyrics in *ṭhumrī* than in *khyāl*.

Perron discusses in depth the extent to which this “female voice” in *ṭhumrī* may, by extension, also come to represent a uniquely feminine perspective. She discusses, for example, one particular *bandīś ṭhumrī* text, in which the female heroine speaks with “anger and desperation” about Krishna, who is harassing her. Based on conversations with musicians and scholars, she notes a tendency to interpret this text as “Radha expressing love for Krishna”, rather than, for example “a despairing woman ... begging to be treated with respect”, an interpretation which she herself offered as an alternative. She suggests that “the explanation [for this] would be that as in India contact between the sexes is actively discouraged, the only opportunity boys and girls get to interact is through this type of teasing”. As a result, she writes, “love and desire in this text ... are understood through a socially and culturally understood medium of feigned outrage at an harassment which is in actual fact an expression of love”. Thus “the female persona in this text is voicing sentiments that are appropriate in a certain poetic and cultural idiom” (180). Perron suggests that this places the heroine in a disempowered position, unable to escape undesired attention, since any objection expressed would be read as merely “feigned outrage”. Perron notes the problems this raises for a feminist scholar who attempts “to come to terms with the justification of what appears to be mere female harassment” (180). Perron draws attention to a subtle difference in the characterisation of the heroine in *bandīś ṭhumrī* texts and the *viraha* (separation)-themed texts of *bol banāo ṭhumrī*, writing that “the *nāyikā* of the *viraha*-themed *ṭhumrī* is more assertive than her harassed cousin in *bandīś ṭhumrī* in that she actively states her desire”. Nevertheless, she, too, “is entirely defined by her mate” (184). Perron also discusses in depth how *ṭhumrī*’s lyrics might be interpreted in the differing contexts of the courtesan’s salon and the modern concert hall, and the ways in which these different interpretations suggest different kinds of feminine expression.

When I interviewed the singer Rashmi Agarwal, I asked her about the femininity of *thumrī*. She, like Perron, attributed this impression of femininity to the idea that the lyrics express a feminine perspective. She said that in *thumrī* “the emotion is more feminine than male”. She continued, “There is a longing and pathos which is depicted through a female point of view.” She feels that this is the case even when a male singer is performing: she took as an example a *thumrī* performance by Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, saying that it “is a very feminine emotion which he is singing”. Likewise, M. R. Gautam takes *thumrī*’s texts as offering evidence of a uniquely feminine perspective on love and desire. He interprets *thumrī*’s textual and musical content as evidence of the character of women at the time when *thumrī* was at its height:

It appears that eligible damsels during the heyday of the *thumrī* were perpetually in a state of dire hunger for love, so much so that they were vulnerable to any concerted pass or glance at them. Therefore, it does not seem surprising to hear the words ‘*Pardeśī bāla kaisā jādū dārā*’ – a stranger comes along and casts his magic spell and lo! the maiden of Banaras is set all aflame by this casual meeting (2001: 50).

In her discussion of the “female voice” of *thumrī*, Perron devotes significant attention to a discussion of some of the problems inherent in analysing *thumrī* as representative of an authentic feminine perspective. Noting that *thumrī*’s lyrics are normally attributed to male authors and that *thumrī* used to be performed for the enjoyment of male audiences, she writes, “It is clear that the female voice of *thumrī* is not an empowered woman’s voice: it is patriarchy’s voice, the *nāyikā*’s voice, a voice that locates women’s expression of feeling in the realm of excitement for men” (2002: 192). She asks, “When a woman creates art that has a female narrator, and yet through that [the] narrator expresses woman’s experience as constructed by an overarching patriarchal ideology, is the voice nevertheless female?” (173). Eventually she describes that voice as “the disempowered voice of the *nāyikā*” (192). The *thumrī* singer and scholar Vidya Rao has made a similar point in her article, “‘Thumri’ as feminine voice”. She writes, “There is little escape from the fact that *thumri* is a form constructed squarely in the male gaze. Women sing, articulating female desire, but as patriarchally-constructed. Their audience consists entirely of men, and the singers will later entertain these men not only musically but sexually as well” (Rao 1990: WS-31).

Noting that *thumrī*’s former performance contexts render the genre “difficult to swallow” for a modern-day, feminist *thumrī*-singer, Rao suggests a novel interpretation of *thumrī*’s femininity, as a way of making the genre more palatable. She rejects the idea that *thumrī* should be considered feminine because of its “evident identification with female singers” or because it “articulates female desire”, noting that that desire is “constructed in the male gaze”; rather, she argues that *thumrī*’s femininity is a consequence of its “interrogative subversive quality”, which she locates in *thumrī*’s musical structure and in “the ways in which it extends its space by playing with ambiguities, meanings, and in its use of humour” (1990: WS-31). She draws

attention to the fact that, unlike *khyāl* and *dhrupad*, *thumrī* performances do not adhere strictly to the rules of *rāg*. She also notes various ways in which musicians might exploit ambiguities in their *thumrī* performances, whether by teasing out layers of meaning in the lyrics or by suggested a variety of *rāgs* in a single performance. She argues that this constitutes a form of feminist subversion, since it challenges the rules of *rāg*, which she equates with patriarchal norms. She also considers the exploration of musical ambiguity to allow *thumrī* “to constantly expand the space available to it in quite unique and unexpected ways” (WS-37), comparing this with the ways in which women under patriarchy “can and have extended their limited spaces in dignified, creative encounters” (WS-31).

Perron has noted some of the problems inherent in Rao’s analysis. She points out that *thumrī*’s failure to conform to the standard rules of *rāg* “is not commonly perceived as an empowering quality but rather as more evidence of the genre’s femaleness: it lacks discipline and order, and so it always in danger of being ‘out of control’, a quintessentially feminine attribute in patriarchal ideology” (2002: 175). Nevertheless, Rao’s description of *thumrī* is valuable: as well as being rich with details of the subtleties of the genre, it also constitutes one highly sophisticated attempt by a modern-day female singer to reclaim *thumrī* as a feminine genre and thus redeem the music that she performs, without necessarily buying into what she considers to be negative stereotypes about women and courtesans.

Other singers find other ways of coming to terms with the problems inherent in the version of femininity presented in the character of *thumrī*’s heroine. Ashwini Bhide Deshpande spoke of the problematic historical specificity of this femininity, saying that “I think in today’s world really the masculinity and femininity need to be re-defined, because the values which you would associate with femininity fifty years ago ... are not associated with femininity anymore.” She noted the necessity of being able to relate to the heroine of the lyrics and told me that her favourite *thumrī* was the *horī* “*Tum radhe bano shyam*”, in which in her interpretation Radha takes an unusually assertive role, such that “she is in command” and “she will dictate [to Krishna] what and how he is to do”. By describing *thumrī* in devotional terms and celebrating an unusually assertive heroine, Deshpande minimises the association between *thumrī* and two different kinds of femininity, both the disreputable, sensuous femininity of the courtesan and the disempowered femininity of *thumrī*’s conventional love-sick heroines, each problematic for different reasons for a modern-day female performer. (The problems these two types of femininity pose for performers of *thumrī* are exaggerated by the expectation of emotional authenticity from *thumrī*’s performers, discussed in Chapter 3.)

Later in this chapter, I will discuss further the idea that both the character of the heroine in *thumrī* and also the way in which listeners interpret that character might be related to models of femininity that emerge from particular cultural and historical circumstances. I will consider not

only *thumrī*'s lyrics but also the role that the *thumrī*'s musical content plays in characterising the heroine. I will also discuss the implications of the musical characterisation of the heroine in *thumrī* in terms of the social construction of gender more broadly.

Gender and North Indian classical music

In the introduction to her celebrated (and controversial) collection of essays, *Feminine Endings* (1991), Susan McClary identifies five clusters of “questions” that animate her work on music and gender. Many of the issues she raises there, largely in relation to Western classical music, are also relevant in the context of North Indian classical music, and *thumrī* in particular.

The first of these clusters, which she labels “musical constructions of gender and sexuality”, concerns the way in which, “in most dramatic music, there are both female and male characters, and usually (though not always) the musical utterances of characters are inflected on the basis of gender” (7). The idea that music might contribute to the gendered characterisation of particular characters resonates with discussions of the “female voice” of *thumrī*. Above, I drew attention to Lalita Du Perron's work on this subject. Specifically, she considers whether *thumrī*'s lyrics may be considered representative of an authentic expression of a feminine perspective or whether, instead, they are more accurately viewed as something imposed upon women by men, or at least by patriarchal social norms, in an instance of cultural ventriloquism. However, it is not only *thumrī*'s lyrics that can give the audience information about the character of the heroine; *thumrī*'s musical features also contribute to this, as McClary suggests. In the next section, I will look in detail at one instance of this, as manifested in one particular *thumrī* performance. My analysis will demonstrate McClary's twin arguments that, firstly, “the musical semiotics of gender can tell us much about the actual music (why these particular pitches and rhythms as opposed to others)” and, secondly, that “studying music from this vantage point can also provide insights into social history itself, insofar as repertoires testify eloquently to the various models of gender organization (whether hegemonic or resistant) available at any given moment” (8).

McClary's second cluster of questions is labelled “gendered aspects of traditional music theory”. Here, she notes music theorists' and analysts' “explicit reliance on metaphors of gender (“masculinity” vs “femininity”) and sexuality in their formulations” (9). She takes as an example of this the conventional way in which Western tonal cadences are usually classified as either “masculine” or “feminine”. For the purposes of this discussion, it is appropriate to widen this group of issues to include all gendered descriptions of Indian classical music, whether explicitly framed as music-theoretical or not, since the gendered descriptions of Indian classical

music presented by scholars and theorists overlap significantly with those of musicians and connoisseurs.

I discussed a number of types of such descriptions above. Here, relationships between descriptions of music and social constructions of gender occur at four levels.

- First, in the clearest instances of such relationships, commentators identify particular musical features or genres as masculine or feminine, explaining why they hear these features as gendered. Such descriptions reveal aspects of the way in which their particular authors think about gender; they can also provide information about the nature of the stereotypical models of gender that exist in the particular social and historical environment in which they appear. These descriptions, further, serve to reinforce those stereotypes in the imaginations of the people who read or hear them.
- At a second level, music may be described as being masculine or feminine as well as a variety of other attributes, in descriptions in which no specific explanation is given for why the commentator hears that music in a gendered way. For example, a reviewer might describe a *dhrupad* performance as both “masculine” and also “vigorous”, without explicitly linking the two. Such a description, however, has the power to create an association between masculinity and vigour by means of proximity. If the two ideas occur together repeatedly, this creates the idea that they are in some way connected.
- Third, musical features might simply be described as masculine or feminine, without any other descriptive clues as to the grounds for that description and without mention of any other attributes. Perron notes that the gendering of a genre will reflect “societal preconceptions and prejudices as to what constitutes masculinity and femininity” (2002: 173). In these descriptions, commentators appeal to ideas about gender which they must assume are shared by the people who hear or read their descriptions. By attaching ideas about gender to musical features that already evoke other connotations, those other connotations can begin to acquire a gendered flavour, too.
- At the fourth level, most dependent on the interpretation of the reader, a commentator may use language associated with gendered stereotypes in a description of musical features or genres, without ever mentioning gender itself. A critic might, for example, describe a *thumrī* performance as “sensuous”: this might evoke ideas about femininity for some people, but not for others.

In my discussion of the gendering of North Indian classical music, I discussed instances of all four types of description, considering, amongst other things, ways in which they shed light on the gendered connotations of musical features and styles. Gendered descriptions of music such as these occur as part of complex, self-perpetuating networks of associations that surround music. While to some listeners a genre might sound masculine because of its use of particularly

masculine-sounding musical features, to others the fact that particular musical features occur in a genre which they had already considered masculine or associated with male performers could be the factor that causes them to hear those features as masculine. If those musical features are also particularly vigorous or forceful, listening to them could also serve to strengthen or confirm gendered stereotypes in which masculinity is linked with vigour and forcefulness.

McClary's third set of questions, labelled "gender and sexuality in musical narrative", concerns her gendered reading of Western classical tonality. She argues that "tonality itself – with its process of instilling expectations and subsequently withholding promised fulfilment until climax – is the principal musical means during the period from 1600 to 1900 for arousing and channeling desire" (12). She draws attention to music's capacity to provoke expectations and delay resolution, and "mechanisms so often called by the neutral name of 'tension and release'". Considering the experience of the listener of tonal music, she asks, "What is it, in other words, that the listener is being invited to desire and why?" She draws attention to the overall structural narrative implied by sonata form in order to argue that "the various narrative paradigms that crystallized during the history of tonality contain many features that are in effect gendered" (13). She suggests that sonata form is the musical manifestation of a particular "cultural paradigm", also revealed in recurring narratives, according to which a male hero subjugates a feminine Other "for the sake of satisfactory narrative close" (14-15). She notes that these "features of composition and reception ... are taken for granted as aspects of autonomous musical practice" and that they "operate below the level of deliberate signification and are thus usually reproduced and transmitted without conscious intervention". As such, she suggests, they constitute "habits of cultural thought" which "remain largely invisible and apparently immutable" (16). She further proposes that "it is through these deeply engrained habits that gender and sexuality are most effectively – and most problematically – organized in music" (17).

It is beyond the scope of this study to consider what "habits of cultural thought" might be reproduced and transmitted in the conventional large-scale structural narratives of North Indian classical music.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, in the next section, I will consider how listening to *thumrī* in particular might be implicated in certain habits of thought that provide listeners with emotional and cognitive tools with which to form an interior sense of gendered identity. In doing so I will demonstrate one instance of what McClary describes as music's capacity to "influence and even constitute the ways listeners experience and define some of their own most intimate feelings" (9).

⁴⁸ McClary's comments about music's capacity to arouse expectations would seem to be highly relevant in the context of North Indian classical music. Richard Widdess has explored how one might analyse North Indian classical music from the perspective of listeners' expectations (2011). Considering what "habits of cultural thought" might be taught to listeners through the experience of these expectations and their fulfilment would seem to be a promising area for future study.

McClary's fourth group of questions, "music as a gendered discourse", deals with the history in the West of music-making's being considered feminine or effeminate. There is a complex history of discussion surrounding music-making and gender in Indian contexts. Katherine Schofield (formerly Brown), for example, has dealt extensively with this issue in Mughal contexts (see for example Brown 2006). Further discussion of this, however, is beyond the scope of this chapter.

Finally, McClary identifies a set of issues under the heading "discursive strategies of women musicians", noting that she is "especially drawn to women artists who, like myself, are involved with examining the premises of inherited conventions" (18-19). In the last chapter, I discussed some of the social strategies which the vocalist Girija Devi employs in relation to *ṭhumrī*, looking both at her statements about *ṭhumrī* and at her musical stylistic choices. I focussed there on their potential to augment her prestige and respectability and that of *ṭhumrī*, however her musical-rhetorical strategies have gendered implications, too. A number of her characteristic stylistic choices involve the avoidance of specifically feminine musical features in favour of either more gender-neutral ones or else even features with specifically masculine connotations.

I noted, for example, that Devi's *ṭhumrī* style involves less ornamentation than the styles of many of her predecessors and contemporaries. I suggested there that this allowed Devi to cultivate a particularly serious and classical-sounding aesthetic in *ṭhumrī*. In a context in which, for example, *dhrupad*'s sparse ornamentation is heard not only as a sound of seriousness but also of masculinity and the florid *murkīs* of *ṭhumrī* are heard as feminine, this stylistic move also constitutes a move away from the overtly feminine *ṭhumrī* style of other singers. Devi's avoidance of what I call "sigh figures" minimises the extent to which her *ṭhumrī* renditions can evoke the highly emotional kind of femininity that audiences associate with courtesans' performances. Devi's unusual emphasis on rhythmic improvisation and lengthy *ālāp* sections evoke the musical style of *dhrupad*, which is gendered masculine. Rhythmic improvisation, itself, is a technique with particularly masculine connotations in North Indian classical music. As well as being characteristic of *dhrupad*, it also characterises the Agra-*gharānā khayāl* style, another style with masculine connotations. In his book on North Indian rhythm and metre, Martin Clayton cites a Sanskrit saying in which *śruti* or pitch is described as the mother of music, while *lay* or rhythm is the father, indicating the long-standing alignment of melody with femininity and rhythm with masculinity within Indian art music (2000: 34). Wim van der Meer suggests that the fact that "the rhythmic variations in *dhrupada* are far more complicated than in *khayāl*" is a consequence of the "general role-division between men and women", since "the rhythmical complexity of *dhrupada* (being almost of an intellectual and mathematical nature,) hardly suit the female role" (1980: 56). By minimising the association between her *ṭhumrī* performances and femininity, and even making use of musical signs of masculinity, Devi takes

attention away from the disreputable female performers who threaten the status of *ṭhumrī* and modern-day *ṭhumrī* singers. This allows her to construct (and perform) a respectable public identity for the female *ṭhumrī* singer in Indian classical music.

In 1990, Judith Butler famously argued that gender is “performative”; she theorised both gender and sex as the consequence of a kind of performance, such that “acts, gestures, articulated and enacted desires create the illusion of an interior and organizing gender core” (2007 [1990]: 186). Various scholars have suggested that Butler’s notion of “performativity” might usefully be applied to music performance. In her chapter, “Musical performances of gender and sex”, for example, Susanne Cusick applies Butler’s theories to song, exploring in depth ways in which singing can be implicated in (culturally specific) performances of gender (1999: 25-43). I would like to suggest that the idea of the “performativity” of gender offers a useful theoretical frame in which to understand Girija Devi’s *ṭhumrī* performances and that the performativity of gender extends even into subtle aspects of musical style. I claim that by making certain stylistic moves in her *ṭhumrī* performances, Devi can (musically) perform particular kinds of femininity, specifically the respectable femininity of the religious devotee and the classically trained musician, while playing down any association with the disreputable femininity of the courtesan.

He mā kārī badariyā barase

In this section, I will present an analysis of Sunanda Sharma’s recording of the *ṭhumrī* “*He mā kārī badariyā barase*”. This analysis is based largely on an interview I recorded with Sharma, in which we discussed this *ṭhumrī* at length. As part of this interview, I played Sharma’s recording of this *ṭhumrī* and we spoke about it as we listened to it together.⁴⁹ There are many different angles I could have taken in interpreting her comments. I could, for example, have used her descriptions as a way of uncovering her intentions in performance. In Chapter 3 I interpreted her descriptions from a semiotic perspective, capitalising on their potential to shed light on the extra-musical connotations of particular musical features. Here, however, I focus on the way in which Sharma engages with the recording as she listens to it, using this as a way of examining the operation of gender norms through *ṭhumrī*.

Sharma introduced this *ṭhumrī* to me by talking about its lyrics. Typical *ṭhumrī* lyrics, these are written from the point of view of a girl who is pining for her absent lover. The first line of the lyrics, “*He mā, kārī badariyā barase, piyā nahī āe*”, means “Oh my mother, the black clouds are full of rain. My lover has not come.” In a South Asian context, these lyrics are loaded with

⁴⁹ I had initially hoped to spend more time with her on this and to do the entire analysis in tandem with her, along the lines which Richard Widdess has suggested (1994). However due to time constraints this was not possible. Nevertheless, talking with a musician about one of her own performances proved a particularly fruitful research method.

significance. The reference to black clouds full of rain implies that it is monsoon, the time when lovers are meant to be reunited. The protagonist here sings of her sadness that *her* lover has not come home. The lyrics continue, “*Jo jo papīhā pīhū pīhū raṭata hai, sunī seja morā jiyarā tarase*”, meaning “Whenever the cuckoo repeats ‘*pīhū pīhū*’, lying on my bed, my heart longs for him”. In a typical theme in *ṭhumrī* lyrics, hearing the song of the *papīhā* reminds the heroine of her lover, because the *papīhā*’s call of “*pīhū*” sounds like the word “*piyā*”, meaning “lover”.

Talking about this recording, provoked by particular musical events, Sharma alluded to a number of different, gendered personae: each of these involve aspects of different, culture-specific models of femininity. Describing her performance, she temporarily took on these different identities, slipping quickly and easily between them. In this section, I will explore the significance of this listening practice in terms of its potential for shedding light on the construction of gendered identities through music. I will argue that it offers a generalisable model of how knowledgeable listeners more broadly engage with *ṭhumrī* in performance, thus suggesting one possible way in which listening to *ṭhumrī* might form part of the way in which individuals learn and re-learn gendered behaviour and emotions.

The singer as the protagonist

In our discussion, Sharma repeatedly described herself as the protagonist of the lyrics, talking of the emotions of the heroine in the first person. Sometimes, she repeated words from the lyrics or spoke words which could have been uttered by the protagonist, but which are not part of the lyrics themselves. Listening to the opening *ālāp* section, for example, she said, “*nahī āe, nahī āe*”, words from the lyrics, which mean, “He has not come; he has not come.” She also said (in English), “What to do? What to do? I’m really sad. What to do?” She made many similar comments as she continued to listen to the rest of the *ṭhumrī*.

It is not only the lyrics of this *ṭhumrī* which can provide information about the character and emotional state of its gendered protagonist. Even before the introduction of the lyrics of the composition, during the un-texted portion of the *ālāp* section, Sharma was keen to point out that the music she was singing also expresses the emotions of the protagonist; taking on the identity of the heroine, she said, “I am talking to my mother through the notes.” Listening to her performance, she also noted various specific ways in which her musical choices were intended to convey the emotions of the heroine. I mentioned some of these in Chapter 3, considering how they were representative of the semiotic potential of particular musical features in *ṭhumrī*. In her comments on this performance, Sharma drew attention to ways in which the music she sang can evoke or represent emotions; it follows, by extension, that music can help to portray the character of the heroine who experiences those emotions. Perron notes that *ṭhumrī*’s lyrics can

be read as representative of a feminine perspective on love and longing; Sharma's comments suggest that the *music* of *ṭhumrī* also plays a role in delineating that feminine perspective.

In Chapter 3, I noted that Sharma draws particular attention to her use of *pukār* in this *ṭhumrī*. There, I considered its ability to evoke shared, emotional connotations for musicians and listeners. These connotations also contribute to the gendered characterisation of the protagonist of this *ṭhumrī*. They portray the extreme longing experienced by the heroine, calling out in desperation to her lover. Sharma highlighted two instances of *pukār* as she listened to her recording. However, she also sings other, similar-sounding phrases at other points in her performance. The two instances of *pukār* which Sharma identified are shown in figures 3.6 and 3.7, in Chapter 3. Sharma sings many other, similar phrases elsewhere in her performance, for example at Q1:4 to R1:4, A2: 3 to B2: 3 and X2:3 to Y2:3 (see the full transcription of this performance in figure 6.1 in the Conclusion). As well as connoting extreme longing, *pukār* also carries particularly feminine associations. *Pukār* is particularly associated with *ṭhumrī*, with the characterisation of a female protagonist and also with female musicians. Music connoisseurs, for example, frequently celebrate the use of “*pukār*” by female singers, pointing to it as evidence of emotional expression; male musicians, meanwhile, are more normally feted for other, non-expressive musical characteristics, such as the “grandeur” or “architecture” of their performances. Musicians and music-lovers often mention it in relation to the emotional *ṭhumrī* performances of Banaras *aḡ* singers, especially former courtesans. When Sharma, for example, was telling me about some of her favourite *ṭhumrī* singers of the past, she mentioned *pukār* only in relation to Siddheshwari Devi, celebrating the non-Banaras-*aḡ* singers she mentioned for other musical characteristics.

Sharma sings the pitches MGR frequently in this performance, often at the ends of phrases. This is to be expected, as it is a defining feature of *rāg Deś* and these pitches are also the last three pitches of the *mukhrā* of this composition. The manner in which Sharma sings these pitches here, however, is significant. They often resemble the way she sang M-GR in her demonstration of musical sadness (discussed in Chapter 3), involving a pause on M and then what I called a “sigh figure”, which tapers off in volume and falls in pitch at the end of the phrase. Figures 5.9, 5.10 and 5.11 show some examples of this. In the transcriptions, I have marked instances of the M-GR figure with boxed letters above the staff and have indicated some of the particularly marked sigh figures with hairpins.

Figure 5.9 shows an extract from the *ālāp* section. The highly embellished rendering of the M-GR figure transcribed here provoked an emotional reaction for Sharma, prompting her to comment, “more deep”. A similarly embellished version of this figure occurs at the start of the extract in figure 5.10, from W:2 to W:4. This initiates a passage containing a large number of renditions of the M-GR figure at the ends of successive phrases (at Y:1, Y:4, Z:3, A1:1, A1:2

and B1:1). Note that she uses this figure to set the text “*ho*” at the end of A1:2. This is not part of the lyrics of this composition, but is an exclamation of grief or longing, equivalent to the English “oh!” or “ah!”. (This also occurs at N: 2.) That she chose the M-GR figure to set this expression underlines the emotional significance to the M-GR figure for Sharma.

In the example in figure 5.10, Sharma’s repeated use of the pitches MGR at the end of successive phrases is an instance of the “end rhyme” strategy, one type of “successive variation” strategy that I discussed in Chapter 2. (These successive phrases in fact share more features than just their common endings. For example, from X:1, each successive phrase starts on G, normally repeated so as to set the lyrics syllabically.) In this context, the *mukhṛā*, from A1:3 to B1:2 takes on new significance as a continuation of the successive variation strategy; it also takes on new emotional significance as part of an extended passage replete with sigh figures, such that the M-GR figure at the end of the *mukhṛā* is now reminiscent of the sigh figures that preceded it, evoking some of their emotional impact. A version of the *mukhṛā* is similarly re-contextualised in the extract in figure 5.11, at I1:4 to J1:1. Here, the successive variation strategy also continues after the *mukhṛā*. The M-GR figure also occurs in the upper octave, for example in the extract in figure 3.7 (in Chapter 3) and also from X2 (see figure 6.1 in the Conclusion).

Figure 5.9, extract from Sharma (2003 [2002]), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg miśra Deś*, 03:00 to 03:09.

Tāl = *tīntāl*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A#. See CD 2, track 35.

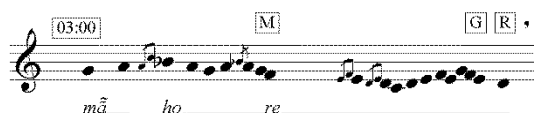


Figure 5.10, extract from Sharma (2003 [2002]), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg miśra Deś*, 06:21 to 07:02.

Tāl = *tīntāl*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A#. See CD 2, track 36.

The musical score for Figure 5.10 consists of five staves of music in *rāg miśra Deś*. The lyrics are: He mā̃ kā - rī ba-da-ri - yā ba-ra - se ba-da-ri- yā ba-ra se mā̃ He mā̃ ho kā - rī ba - da - ri - yā ba - ra - se. The score includes various musical notations: triplets (3), quintuplets (5), and melisma marks (W, M, G, R, X, Y, Z, A1, B1). The tempo is *tīntāl* and the original pitch is *Sa* ~ A#.

Figure 5.11, extract from Sharma (2003 [2002]), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg miśra Deś*, 07:53 to 08:10.

Tāl = *tīntāl*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A#. See CD 2, track 37.

The musical score for Figure 5.11 consists of two staves of music in *rāg miśra Deś*. The lyrics are: na - hĩ ā - e na - hĩ ā - e mā̃ ba-da-ri - yā ba-ra - se pi - yā na - hĩ ā - e. The score includes various musical notations: triplets (3), melisma marks (II, J1, M, G, R), and other musical symbols. The tempo is *tīntāl* and the original pitch is *Sa* ~ A#.

M-GR figures are mirrored in the upper half of the octave by similar figures involving the pitches NDP. There is one example of this in figure 3.6 (in Chapter 3), where it forms part of the first phrase which Sharma identified as demonstrating *pukār* (and where it is followed by a rendition of the M-GR sigh figure). Other examples of this occur in the extract in figure 5.12. Here, like the M-GR figure in the previous extracts, these occur as part of an ongoing successive variation (end-rhyme) strategy. The final NDP figure in this extract (at Y1: 1 to Y1: 2) is followed by a M-GR figure, in a way that strongly resembles the end of the extract in figure 3.6. A similar use of the NDP figure to create end rhyme between successive phrases also occurs earlier in the performance, from K1: 1 to M1: 2. Other, isolated instances of NDP sigh figures at the ends of phrases occur throughout this performance (see Figure 6.1).

Figure 5.12, extract from Sharma (2003 [2002]), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg miśra Deś*, 09:35 to 10:02.

Tāl = *tīntāl*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A#. See CD 2, track 38.

The musical score consists of three staves. The first staff has a vocal line with lyrics 'kā - rī ba-da-ri - yā ba ra - se mā' and an instrumental line. The second staff continues the vocal line with lyrics 'ba-da-ri-yā ba-ra-se ba-da-ri-yā ba - ra-se' and includes a triplet of eighth notes. The third staff continues the vocal line with lyrics 'mā ba - da - ri - yā ba-ra - se mā' and includes a triplet of eighth notes. The score is marked with various musical notations including triplets, slurs, and specific pitch bends marked with boxes labeled V1, W1, N, D, P, X1, and Y1.

Sharma's use of *pukār* and sigh figures, two particularly emotional musical features, emphasises the extremely fraught emotional state of the heroine of this *ṭhumrī*. They also seemed especially likely to provoke Sharma to identify with the heroine, commenting in the first person on her emotional state. The first time Sharma did this was in the first half of the *ālāp* section, from about 01:25, after she had heard a phrase which for the first time introduced and which strongly resembles one of the phrases she later identified as being representative of *pukār*. Immediately after hearing a sigh figure setting the pitches NDP, she said, “*nahī āe, nahī āe*”, anticipating a line in the lyrics (not yet introduced), which means, “He has not come”. Then from around 01:30, after hearing yet another rendition of a sigh figure setting NDP, she said, “What to do? What to do? I’m really sad. What to do?” Here she was saying words which could have been uttered by the protagonist, but which do not form part of the lyrics. Listening to the start of the second half of the *ālāp*, from 02:10 to 02:20 she said, “Oh my mother!” and “Listen to me!”, again speaking as if she were the protagonist and again provoked by phrases which dwell on N and in characteristic instances of *pukār*. Here she also said “Intensity”, temporarily taking a step back from identifying with the heroine and describing the nature of her performance as an observer.

Later in the recording, other phrases also provoked Sharma to speak as if she were the protagonist. At J: 3 to J: 4, Sharma sings “*mā*” in a pleading manner to the notes PRM. After hearing this on the recording, she sang the phrase to me again, then saying, “Now it’s like, ‘Ma, come, come, come!’” and motioning with her arm as if to grab somebody. At L: 3 to L: 4, where she explores higher register than before and in a more forceful manner than the previous phrase, Sharma said, “The words are like that: he has not *come*.” Here she spoke more loudly than she had been before, echoing the shift in mood in her *ṭhumrī* performance at this point.

Above I noted a perceived tension between two different approaches to *ṭhumrī*, one characterised by a sense of emotional outpouring and the other by soft, delicate ornamentation

and each suggesting different types of femininity. Sharma's *thumrī* renditions are highly emotional; however, they also contain numerous instances of delicate ornamental figures. Figures 5.13, 5.14, 5.15 and 5.16 contain many examples of this. Note the successively transposed versions of circling figures in 5.15 and 5.16. In both cases, these figures circle around a central note, spelling out the contour 23212, in a manner similar to Guha's demonstration of *murkī*, above. A more complex, overlapping version of this occurs in 5.14.

Figure 5.13, extract from Sharma (2003 [2002]), *thumrī* in *rāg miśra Deś* 03:20 to 04:08.

Tāl = *tīntāl*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A#. See CD 2, track 39.

Figure 5.13 shows a musical score for a *thumrī* in *rāg miśra Deś*. The score consists of six staves. The first staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are: "ba - da - ri - yā ba - ra - se". The second staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The lyrics are: "He mā kā - rī ba - da - ri - yā ba - ra - se". The third staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The lyrics are: "He mā kā - rī ba - da - ri - yā ba - ra - se". The fourth staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The lyrics are: "He mā kā - rī ba - da - ri - yā ba - ra - se mā". The fifth staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The lyrics are: "ba - da - ri - yā ā ba - ra - se mā". The sixth staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The lyrics are: "ho kā - rī ba - da - ri - yā ba - ra - se". Labels A through F are placed above specific measures in the score.

Figure 5.14, extract from Sharma (2003 [2002]), *thumrī* in *rāg miśra Deś*, 05:47 to 06:08.

Tāl = *tīntāl*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A#. See CD 2, track 40.

Figure 5.14 shows a musical score for a *thumrī* in *rāg miśra Deś*. The score consists of three staves. The first staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are: "kā - rī ba-da-ri yā ba-ra se". Above the staff, there are rhythmic notations: "2 3 2 1 2 / 2 3 2 1 2". The second staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The lyrics are: "ba - da - ri - yā ba - ra - se ba - ra - se". The third staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The lyrics are: "kā - rī ba - da - ri - yā ba - ra - se". Labels S, T, and U are placed above specific measures in the score.

Figure 5.15, extract from Sharma (2003 [2002]), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg miśra Deś*, 06:30 to 06:39.

Tāl = *tīntāl*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A#. See CD 2, track 41.



Figure 5.16, extract from Sharma (2003 [2002]), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg miśra Deś*, 09:26 to 09:34.

Tāl = *tīntāl*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A#. See CD 2, track 42.



In addition to delicate ornamentation, Sharma also demonstrates vocal delicacy in other ways, for example in the way she manipulates the volume of her singing. The *ālāp* section, for example contains a particularly marked rendition of the figure P P , in which is noticeably quieter than the surrounding notes. It first appears from around 01:35 in the *ālāp* (figure 5.17) and then also appears at A1: 2 (figure 5.18), I1: 2 (figure 5.19) and, in a modified form, at the end of X1: 4 (figure 5.20). (Note that in all of these cases this is part of a common, longer melodic outline, continuing D(P)MGR.) This sudden reduction of volume at forms part of a larger set of strategies, used in both *ṭhumrī* and *khyāl*, in which the singer suddenly sings quietly at the upper registral peak of a phrase, contrary to expectations that, if anything, the volume would get louder as the melody rises in pitch. This sudden withdrawal of volume and holding-back manifests a similar quiet delicacy as that which is evident in the subtle ornamentation Sharma employs elsewhere. It also has a marked emotional effect, confounding expectations that higher notes will be sung louder than lower ones.

Figure 5.17, extract from Sharma (2003 [2002]), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg miśra Deś*, 01:34 to 01:44.

Tāl = *tīntāl*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A#. See CD 2, track 43.



Figure 5.18, extract from Sharma (2003 [2002]), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg miśra Deś*, 06:54 to 07:03.

Tāl = *tīntāl*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A#. See CD 2, track 44.



Figure 5.19, extract from Sharma (2003 [2002]), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg miśra Deś*, 07:53 to 08:00.

Tāl = *tīntāl*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A#. See CD 2, track 45.



Figure 5.20, extract from Sharma (2003 [2002]), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg miśra Deś*, 09:55 to 10:02.

Tāl = *tīntāl*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A#. See CD 2, track 46.



In interview, Sharma spoke of the heroines of *ṭhumrī* in general in terms of the natural shyness of women. She said, “Women are shy. They deal with very small issues. Husbands are males, they are lovers, they are ready to do big things for women, but there are very small things which are for women.” She gave as an example of this a situation in which a husband looked at his wife, “but there wasn’t love in his looks”. Although he might say “I have done this” or “I have brought you this thing”, nevertheless “she will see [that] the way he looked at me wasn’t the real thing.” Sharma continued, “Women ... deal with very very sensitive things. Their sixth sense is very strong. With only one look, she can make out [that] he is here but he is not here.” This idea of sensitivity and the “small things” which are for women resonates with the ornamental delicacy of Sharma’s *ṭhumrī* performances.

In combining the emotional outpouring typical of the Banaras *gharānā* with the delicate ornamentation more normally associated with other *ṭhumrī* styles, musical features which are sometimes considered mutually exclusive (see above), Sharma’s *ṭhumrī* style displays great variety. In some ways, this variety is a natural extension of the widespread view that *ṭhumrī* should reflect the changing emotions of a protagonist, encompassing as much musical variation

as the lyrics afford. It also reflects an increasing tendency amongst musicians to combine different *thumrī* styles in their performances. This might, as Manuel has suggested (1989: 92-3), be due to the widespread dissemination of recorded performances, allowing performers to be influenced by large number of other singers, not only by their own particular teacher. It also offers Sharma (and others) a way of responding to the multiple contradictory pressures to appear to be singing “authentic” *thumrī*, according to different models of what *thumrī* is. By combining these stylistic features, Sharma avoids being criticised either for a lack of emotion or for failing to sing enough delicate ornaments in *thumrī*.

In Sharma’s description of her performance, musical features and lyrics come together to characterise the heroine whose identity she temporarily assumes. They paint a picture of a devoted, chaste and forgiving lover, inflicted with almost unbearable sadness at the absence of her beloved and who longs intensely for his return. This is a character already well known to connoisseurs of *thumrī*. This heroine, or similar, is the protagonist of almost all *thumrī* compositions. Sometimes the lyrics explicitly reveal her to be Radha or one of the *gopīs* of Hindu mythology, pining for the absent Krishna, or perhaps pleading with him not to leave. At other times, she might simply be a village girl, singing of a historical, rural experience of love (see Perron 2007).

A similar or identical heroine also appears in descriptions by Sharma of other *thumrī* compositions. Earlier in the same interview with her, she had told me a story to explain the composition of the *thumrī* “*Itanī araja morī mān*”. She described the composer as a simple woman of Banaras, with no musical training. After a misunderstanding with her husband, she felt hurt; instead of saying anything to him, for fear of offending him, she instead penned the *thumrī* as a way of expressing her sorrow. This, again, paints the picture of a devoted heroine who would rather suffer great unhappiness than offend her husband. Similarly Sharma told me a story about the heroine of the *thumrī* “*Nahaka lāe gavanava*”, who had been betrothed to her husband from a young age, but who was abandoned by him after their marriage, when he travelled away to work and or spend time with a rival. In Sharma’s imagination, this heroine was raised simply to love her husband; she said that, in those times, girls were taught only to love their husbands and were not provided any education or allowed any autonomy. The heroine therefore would continue to love and long for her absent husband, in spite of his wrongdoings. This character represents one particular, historicised model of femininity. I would like to argue, further, that the way in which Sharma and other twentieth-century singers describe the heroine of *thumrī* also bears the imprint of particular ideas about femininity that came to prominence under colonialism as part of Hindu nationalist discourse.

Partha Chatterjee has famously theorised the relationship between nationalism and gender in colonial India, focussing on nineteenth-century Bengal. He identifies an ideological framework

in which Indian nationalism “located its own subjectivity in the spiritual domain of culture, where it considered itself superior to the West and hence undominated and sovereign” (1989: 631). In this framework, spirituality was associated with the home, the interior and above all with women, which were considered in opposition to the male-dominated public sphere, which was subject to colonial control (623). For nationalism, he writes, “the crucial requirement was to retain the inner spirituality of indigenous social life” (624). In this formulation, “the home was the principle site for expressing the spiritual quality of the national culture” and thus “women must take the main responsibility to protecting and nurturing this quality” (626). Women, therefore, were held responsible for nurturing the “soul of the nation”. This resulted in demands for women to display particular kinds of feminine attributes, embodied in the figure of what Chatterjee labels the “new woman” (627), discursively opposed both to the low-status “common woman”, who was “coarse, vulgar, loud, quarrelsome, devoid of superior moral sense, sexually promiscuous [and] subjected to brutal physical oppression by males” (627) and the “Westernized woman” who was “fond of useless luxury and cared little for the well-being of the home” (625). The new woman, on the other hand, was configured as an educated housewife who embodied “womanly virtues such as chastity, self-sacrifice, submission, devotion, kindness, patience and labors of love” (629).⁵⁰ Suruchi Thapar expands on Chatterjee’s description of the “new woman”, writing that she “was supposed to be devoted to her husband and to show reverence for elders”. Furthermore, she writes, the new woman “was supposed to be her husband’s *Ardhangini* (complementary half) and *Sahadharmini* (helpmate), as well as to possess the virtues of benevolence and self-sacrifice” (1993: 84). Discussing the significance of Hindu nationalist models of femininity in the context of debates about the legal age of consent in the 1890s, Tanika Sarkar notes some of the consequences of the resulting attitude to marital fidelity: “The woman needed to be strictly faithful, even if her husband abandoned her, remarried many times, even if the marriage was not consummated, and even if he died” (2000: 603).

Chatterjee’s focus is on nineteenth-century Bengal, although he notes the longevity of the “new woman” formation of femininity. He writes, “It is undeniable that the specific ideological form in which we know the “Indian woman” construct in the modern literature and arts of India today is wholly a product of the development of a dominant middle-class culture coeval with the era of nationalism” (1989: 630). Other scholars have traced the development of the figure of the “new woman” in later contexts, looking at models of femininity within nationalist and other Indian contexts up until present day.

⁵⁰ Kumkum Sangari has noted that there is significant overlap between nationalist and colonial British ideologies around models of femininity (2002: 122).

Some have considered the impact of Gandhi's feelings about women and their role in nationalism. Suruchi Thapar, for example, notes that Gandhi argued that "the qualities of self-sacrifice and 'silent suffering' were ingrained in Indian women", with the result that he felt that "women were ideally suited to participate in his movement, the core concepts of which are *ahimsa* (non-violence in thought, action and deed) and *satyagraha*" (1993: 86). Sucheta Mazumdar has traced the consequences and development of the nationalist construction of femininity over time, considering the intersection of gendered ideologies with ideas about caste and class. She notes the contradiction inherent in the fact that "while political activism had unexpected consequences and made some of the women independent-minded political activists, Gandhi emphasized the upper-caste Hindu norms of female self-sacrifice and self-effacement, modesty and morality" (1992: 12), ideas which continue to influence modern-day nationalist literature.

Sikata Banerjee has discussed the emphasis on women's chastity and virtue in modern-day Hindu nationalism, noting that even female activists whom she interviewed "referred to the necessity of privileging the roles of wife and mother over all other roles a middle-class woman can choose to play in contemporary Indian society" (2006: 70). She links this with the "imagining of India as a woman's body", which "fits into the discourse of nation as woman" and which also "links with ideas of national honor being expressed by female bodies" (75). In another more recent context, Purnima Mankekar has discussed how similar ideas of Indian womanhood influence TV programming (2009 [1999]).

In Perron's discussion of the female voice of *thumrī*, she focuses on its changing significance in different performance contexts, as a means by which a courtesan could seduce her patron and then as an expression of religious devotion. I would like to suggest that the modern-day interpretation of the significance of *thumrī*'s first-person female protagonist is also significant insofar as it is a manifestation of some of the attributes of a particular, socially constructed model of femininity, which is based on ancient traditions, was emphasised in certain nationalist discourses and has continued to exist discursively even long after Indian independence.

The picture which Sharma paints of the protagonist (both musically and in conversation) is of a devoted, chaste wife, who longs for her husband despite his long absences and forgives him any wrongdoing. The love she experiences is innocent: in this particular *thumrī*, the protagonist relates her feelings of longing to her mother. This echoes nationalist discursive constructions of ideal femininity, as embodied for example in the position of the devoted wife or in Gandhi's ideas about the inherently self-sacrificing nature of women. *Thumrī* pre-dates Hindu nationalism. Nonetheless its characteristic lyrics and musical figures *afford* interpretations, such as that by my teacher, which paint the picture of a particular kind of feminine character that

bears the imprint of certain conceptions of femininity, privileged within Hindu nationalist discourses.

Listening to her *ṭhumrī* performance, Sharma identifies in the first person with the model of femininity represented by the protagonist of the lyrics, a similar (or identical) character and version of femininity to the heroines of the vast majority of *ṭhumrīs*, and one which resonates with culture-specific models of femininity more broadly. Sharma's musical choices also contribute to the characterisation of this heroine, as Sharma was keen to point out. However this protagonist is not the only (gendered) identity that Sharma assumed in our discussion of this *ṭhumrī*.

The singer as devotee

When describing how she felt during her performance, Sharma also situated herself as a religious devotee. Before I turned on the recording, Sharma had already described the overall mood of the *ṭhumrī* as not only “sad” but also “mystic”, specifically evoking a sense of spirituality in relation to a *ṭhumrī* which, on its face, concerns merely the love and longing of a simple village girl whose lover is absent at the time when he was expected. (In this *ṭhumrī*, unlike many others, there is no indication that this girl is a *gopī* or that her lover is the god Krishna.) After listening to her performance for a few minutes, Sharma said, “This can be meditative”, then saying, “I am connecting myself somewhere”.

A variety of musical features afford this interpretation. The *ālāp* section of this *ṭhumrī* is unusually long: Sharma does not initiate the metered section of her performance until nearly three and a half minutes into the track. As Widdess and Sanyal point out, *ālāp* carries particular associations with spirituality in North Indian classical music: they note that in the oral tradition it is often represented “as a spiritual process or ritual act” (2004: 169). Before I played the recording, I asked Sharma about the unusual length of this *ālāp*. Then, she said that she did not believe that this unusual length was the result of any special emphasis on spirituality but suggested that it might have been motivated by the fact that her teacher was in the audience and as a result she felt that the performance was a serious and important occasion. However the timing of her comments about the “meditative” nature of her performance, which she made while listening to the *ālāp* section, suggests that the *ālāp* here did indeed connote a sense of spirituality to her.

The particular way in which Sharma opens her performance is also significant in this context. She commences by singing the figure R S, pausing on S. Starting a performance with a pause on S, the tonic, is a very common strategy in *ṭhumrī* and in the performance of other genres. For Sharma, however, this carries special significance. She has told me in lessons that one should always commence one's practice by singing S. She believes that this is the equivalent of “om”

and that it acts as a way of “opening oneself to the divine”. (Sharma sometimes commences her practice sessions by actually singing “*om*” to S and I have heard other musicians open concerts in this way.) It is a sign of the weight Sharma attaches to devotional interpretations of music that she hears such significance even in the common North Indian classical structural feature of opening on the middle tonic. In this performance, after this opening gambit, the *ālāp* continues slowly, including lengthy pauses on P and (for example at 0:49, 1:17, 2:20 and 2:50), all of which evoke a meditative atmosphere.

Spirituality and a sense of connection with the divine are of great personal importance to Sharma. In my lessons, she frequently described her singing of both *ṭhumrī* and *khyāl* as a kind of meditation and as akin to her practice of yoga. Talking about *ṭhumrī* in interview, after noting ways in which *ṭhumrīs* can describe love and separation, she said, “Then in *ṭhumrī* you can also worship. ... There’s a *ṭhumrī* in *Bhairavī*. She is singing that in this big world I am lost. O God, come and show me the path! This is not about a lover and a simple love story.” Sharma then suggested that the heroine of this *Bhairavī ṭhumrī* might be thinking, “I have done so many sins in life that the bundle of sins has become very heavy on the head, so I am restless. How can I rest?” This constitutes a specifically devotional reinterpretation of a typical theme in *ṭhumrī* lyrics in which a heroine is unable to sleep because she is longing for her absent lover.

Many other classical singers, too, refer to themselves as devotees when talking about musical performance. In the last chapter, I discussed the significance of a devotional discourse in singers’ attempts to raise the prestige and respectability of *ṭhumrī*. This figure of the devotee is also significant in terms of gender. As Perron has pointed out, encouraging a devotional understanding of *ṭhumrī* allows singers to minimise the association between the *ṭhumrī* and the disreputable femininity of the courtesan, instead allowing for a more palatable interpretation of *ṭhumrī*’s lyrics for *ṭhumrī*’s new, middle-class audiences. In taking on the role of a religious devotee, Sharma, like her teacher, participates in this ongoing negotiation of the social identity of the *ṭhumrī* singer, in which singers claim respectability by representing themselves as devout and conservative, thereby avoiding being associated with the seductive, sensuous femininity of the courtesan.

Talking about *ṭhumrī* in devotional terms also carries further layers of gendered significance. The role of religious devotee has a wider presence in South Asian culture and is associated with both the *bhakti* tradition of Hinduism and Sufism in Islam. Musicians, both men and women, sometimes speak of the feminine nature of this role, in which passionate love, sometimes explicitly directed towards the god Krishna, is considered a form of religious devotion. Thus in her biography of Begum Akhtar (her teacher), Rita Gangoly explains *ṭhumrī*’s femininity with reference to what she considers to be the devotional nature of the genre: “Interestingly *thumri*-singing has essentially been a feminine expression. Since the Lord, being the sole creator and

the only man is your supreme lover, and you are his beloved, so the entire human race is supposedly feminine, yearning to be united with the Lord. That explains why the complete repertoire was feminine in expression..." (2008: 260). By describing the "entire human race" as "supposedly feminine", Gangoly universalises the femininity of *thumrī*, opening it up to male singers and male perspectives. Similarly, in his liner notes for a CD by Girija Devi (2004), Deepak Raja writes: "Thumri is immersed in the Bhakti (devotion) movement, and the amorous joys of Radha, a cowherd's daughter, and her divine paramour, Krishna. Their legendary romance, defining the ambiguous zone between the accessible and the unattainable, became a metaphor for man's spiritual quest. The cultural expressions of the metaphor thus came to have a female protagonist, anguished by separation from her beloved, and yearning for union with him."⁵¹

The role of devotee carries gendered connotations even in non-musical contexts. Describing the formulation of gender within *bhakti*, Sharada Sugirtharajah writes that "*bhakti* allowed both women and men to relate to God in a personal way", noting also that "men who desired to approach the male deity as their beloved felt free to imagine themselves as a woman yearning for her Lord" (2002: 103). In her work on gender and *Kathak* dance, Purnima Shah discusses Vaishnavite gender ideologies. She notes that Vaishnavas of the Gaudiya sect practise religious exercises which "involve male devotees identifying with the female in order to realize the female principle within themselves", while "male members of the Sakhi Bhava sect ... dress themselves as women in imitation of gopis as a regular part of their devotional *sadhana*" (1998:10). Graham Schweig has described the "importance of the feminine" (2002: 439) in the theology of the sixteenth-century saint Caitanya, in which the "subservient, loving role of women" is taken as "exemplifying the highest and most intense form of *bhakti*, demonstrated in the devotion of the Gopīs" and in which women's "inherent humility and meekness" are celebrated for their suitability for devotion (442). Female devotion is often also associated with the saint Mirabai, who serves as a model for many devotees (Sangari 1990). When Sharma takes on the identity of religious devotee, then, she is also assuming a culturally constructed role that carries specifically feminine connotations and that is associated with a particular set of attributes, perceived as feminine. These overlap with but are not identical to the attributes that are associated with a *navikā* who longs for a human lover.

Religious devotion is also significant in terms of the "new woman", discussed in the previous section. Chatterjee notes that this model of femininity required the display of "certain culturally visible spiritual qualities", including "in her dress, her eating habits, her social demeanor [and]

⁵¹ Richard Widdess (2012, personal communication) has pointed out one further aspect of the long-standing historical association between *thumrī* and feminine devotion: representations of *Bhairavī*, one of the most common *thumrī* *rāgs*, in *rāgamālā* paintings show a female devotee worshipping a *Śiva linga*.

her religiosity” (1989: 629). He writes of the importance of “the spiritual qualities of self-sacrifice, benevolence, devotion, religiosity, and so on” within the “new construct of ‘woman’ standing as a sign for ‘nation’” (630). By situating herself as a religious devotee, Sharma also takes up a subject position that overlaps with the “new woman” of nationalist ideology. (This adds a further layer of significance, also, to the way in which Girija Devi projects an explicitly devotional public image, as discussed in the last chapter. This does not only serve to distance her and her music from courtesans; it also allows her to present in public aspects of the highly respectable “new woman” identity.)

The singer as a classical musician

At other times in our discussion, Sharma referenced a very different kind of femininity by drawing attention to her identity as a female classical musician. She was careful to point out certain, specifically classical techniques in her *ṭhumrī* performance. Note, for example, the phrase in figure 5.21, from about five and a half minutes into the performance: this traces the outline R S. Note its resemblance to the way in which Sharma opens this *ṭhumrī*, shown in figure 5.22.

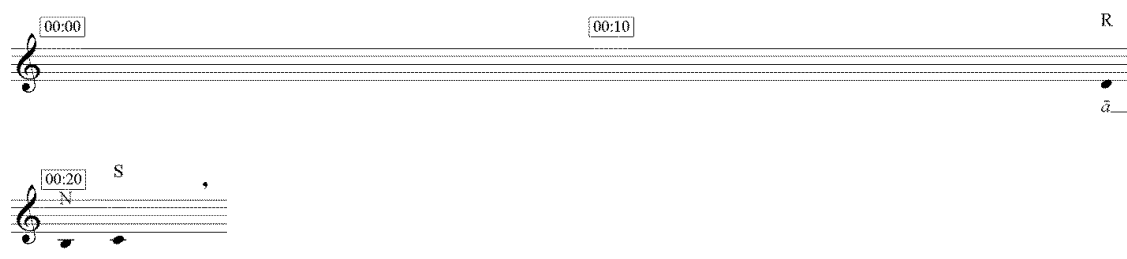
Figure 5.21, extract from Sharma (2003 [2002]), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg miśra Deś*, 05:34 to 05:40.

Tāl = *tīntāl*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A#. See CD 2, track 47.



Figure 5.22, extract from Sharma (2003 [2002]), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg miśra Deś*, 00:19 to 00:26.

Tāl = *tīntāl*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A#. See CD 2, track 48.



After hearing this, Sharma said, “system”. Earlier in the interview Sharma had already explained that, in talking about “system” in North Indian classical music, she was referring to the systematic, step-by-step, highly rule-bound exposition of the rag of the composition that occurs in the classical genres *khyāl* and *dhrupad*. In mentioning this system in relation to her

ṭhumrī performance, Sharma highlighted the classical training that informs her *ṭhumrī* style and drew attention to her status as an established, classical musician.

Musically, Sharma takes a classical approach to *ṭhumrī* style throughout this performance. By opening her performance with the short phrase R S, the phrase which later prompted Sharma to say “system”, Sharma establishes the middle tonic and introduces one of the key phrases of *rāg Deś*, the *rāg* of the composition. Opening with such a phrase is a standard gambit in a classical performance, but is unusual in the performance of a semi-classical genre like *ṭhumrī*.

A number of other, specifically classical features follow this very classical-sounding opening phrase. Note, for example, the way in which Sharma gradually expands the pitch register she uses, introducing phrases which explore successively higher notes, in a manner which evokes the process of *vistār* as it appears in *khyāl* and *dhrupad*. This is summarised in the table in figure 5.23. There I have divided the *ālāp* into phrase units, such that each new unit starts at the point where Sharma takes a breath. This *vistār*-influenced melodic development is evident not only in an overall rise in the highest note she introduces in each phrase-unit, but also in overall shape produced by the notes on which she chooses to rest for more than three seconds, also shown in the table. This *ālāp* section has two halves, separated by a pause of about twenty seconds. This structural break also affects the process of *vistār* here. After exploring successively higher notes and eventually reaching , Sharma returns to a lower register at the end of the first half of the *ālāp*: the first half therefore, on its own, is a manifestation of a complete version of the *vistār* schema, according to which a singer should explore ever higher register before returning to the middle tonic. The second half, then, explores an even higher register than the first, reaching before again returning to a lower register, thus continuing the process of *vistār* in a larger version of the *vistār* schema, within which the first half of the *ālāp* is embedded. (The *ālāp* is also transcribed in full in figure 6.1 in the Conclusion of this thesis.) Note also a gradual increase in rhythmic intensity over the course of the *ālāp*. Both an overall registral expansion and an increase in rhythmic density are standard procedures in the *rāg* exposition of *dhrupad* or *khyāl*. Finally note that Sharma does not sing the lyrics themselves until the second half of the *ālāp*, introducing her performance with a lengthy un-texted section. This is an unusually long un-texted introduction for a *ṭhumrī* and is reminiscent of the long un-texted sections that open *dhrupad* performances.

Figure 5.23, table showing the pitch progression of the *ālāp* in Sharma (2003 [2002]),
ṭhumrī in *rāg miśra Deś*.

Time	Highest Note	Lowest Note	Notes more than 3 seconds long
00:09 to 00:22	R		
00:23 to 00:34	M (touches on P)	R	
00:36 to 00:45	M		G
00:47 to 01:04	<u>N</u>	R	P
01:05 to 01:11	N (touches on and)	R	N
01:14 to 01:16		D	
01:17 to 01:27	(touches on)	P	
01:28 to 01:33	D (touches on <u>N</u>)	R	
01:34 to 01:44		R	
01:45 to 01:47	G		
01:48 to 01:51	S (touches on R)	(touches on)	
PAUSE			
02:10 to 02:15	N (touches on and R)	R	
02:18 to 02:33		P	
02:35 to 02:46	S (touches on)	R	
02:48 to 02:58		P	
03:00 to 03:08	<u>N</u> (touches on)	R	
03:09 to 03:12	R (touches on G)	(touches on)	
03:13 to 03:15	S	(touches on P)	

The metered section of this performance, too, is informed by the process of *vistār*. (See the full transcription of this performance in figure 6.1 in the Conclusion.) This appears to start from scratch again after the close of the *ālāp*: in the *ālāp*, Sharma had expanded the register of her performance to include , but in the metered section, she works gradually up to that registral peak again. In the first portion of singing, from A to F: 1, Sharma focuses on the lower and middle parts of the octave. She occasionally, briefly touches on N and S, in the context of quick ornamental flourishes at B: 3 and E: 1. The second portion of singing, from H: 2 to L: 1 dwells in a similar register. Here, Sharma very briefly touches on N at I: 1, but never goes higher than that. The next portion of singing, from L: 3 to P: 1, explores a much higher register, first moving up to N in L: 4 and then resting on from M: 1. She then returns to a lower register to

complete this section. The process of *vistār* seems, once again, to re-start from Q, where she sings the phrase that prompted her to note the “system” in her singing. This initiates a section, from Q: 1 to U: 1, which remains in the lower half of the middle *saptak*, never moving higher than P. The next section, from W: 1 to B1: 2, mainly dwells in the middle of the middle *saptak*, but briefly touches on at A1: 2. The next section, from E1: 2 to O1: 2, gradually expands upwards, in passage strongly informed by the process of *vistār*. Towards the start of this section, she remains in the middle part of the middle octave, pausing on P in E1:3 to E1: 4 and in F1: 4. In H1: 4 and I1: 2, she briefly sings , expanding her range upwards, but she does not rest on for a significant amount of time. In K1: 2, she rests on N, a higher note than any of the previous on which she rested in this section. Then in L1:3, she rests on , after which she sings a number of phrases using , before returning again to a lower register. From P1:2, her singing dwells in the upper half of the middle octave and around , representing a shift upwards from anything that had occurred so far in the metered section. occurs for the first time in the metered section in R1: 3. Her singing remains in this higher tessitura when she introduces the *antarā* from Y1: 3 and she rests for the first time on in A2: 1. In M2: 2, she introduces and rests on the highest notes of the performance so far, , then briefly touching on . Her singing remains high in her register, with another exceptionally high phrase from X2: 4, until the end of the main metered section, where she returns to the middle of the middle octave in preparation for the *laggī*. This classical approach to melodic development in *thumrī* is typical of Sharma’s style and is an important part of the way in which she teaches the genre.

There are also other classical features in this performance. Throughout this *thumrī*, the move from N to is accomplished in a typically classical way and according to a specific, classical formula. Note the way in which Sharma first introduces in the metered section, shown in figure 3.6 (in Chapter 3). In L: 4, Sharma pauses on N and then breaks off, leaving a couple of seconds of silence, thereby generating strong expectations for , which are fulfilled satisfyingly from M: 1. This resembles the way in which Sharma had first introduced in the *ālāp* section. There, from around 01:12, she sang two phrases, both of which ended on N, before finally resting on from 01:18 (see figure 5.24). (As in N: 1 to N: 2, she then continues by oscillating between N and before singing NDP and then concluding with the figure MGR, indicating that both of these extracts are manifestations of a shared, underlying melodic outline.) Sharma sings something similar at the start of the second half of the *ālāp*, from 02:10 and shown in figure 5.25. There, her first phrase-unit breaks off on N, after which she fulfils expectations by singing a phrase moves from N to , then oscillating between the two. Her next phrase-unit again focuses on S and includes this oscillation and ends with the figure NDP. The next phrase, not shown here, as in the extracts in figures H and Y, ends with MGR. Other, similar and typically classical moves from N to occur throughout her performance.

Figure 5.24, extract from Sharma (2003 [2002]), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg miśra Deś*, 01:05 to 01:34.

Tāl = *tīntāl*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A#. See CD 2, track 49.

Figure 5.25, extract from Sharma (2003 [2002]), *ṭhumrī* in *rāg miśra Deś*, 02:07 to 03:00.

Tāl = *tīntāl*. Original pitch: *Sa* ~ A#. See CD 2, track 50.

Sharma also commented on other technical, musical processes as she listened to her recording. Listening to the opening of the metered section, she drew attention to her ingenious mastery of the technique of *bol banāo* improvisation, in which musicians vary their musical settings of a single piece of text in order to bring out different nuances. Specifically, she notes how she altered the emphasis of the words “*kārī badariyā barase*”, saying, “Sometimes the emphasis is on “clouds”, sometimes on “black”, sometimes on “*mā*”, but stressing that she never sang the words out of order, always taking care that they retained their meaning. She repeatedly also spoke about this process and the “imagination” it requires in my lessons. (See figure 5.13, above, for a transcription of this passage. There I have roughly aligned vertically different renditions of the same lyrics, to show how she emphasises different words each time she sings that line of the lyrics.)

Similarly, in Sharma’s discussion of the *laggī* of this performance, she focussed her description on abstract musical processes. She feels that this section constitutes less an expression of the emotions of the lyrics than an opportunity for the singer to “celebrate the composition”. She said, “You must have seen [that] every singer, when he or she comes to the *laggī*, becomes happy”. Even if the lyrics are sad, she said, “there’s something new that gives him or her new

inspiration”. Again drawing attention to the fact that the structure of *ṭhumrī* represents an abstract musical process, she said that this is an example of “system” in *ṭhumrī*, which “gives a new kind of happiness to the artist”, describing that happiness as the “musical happiness” that results from a “beautiful step of *ṭhumrī*”. In her description here, she specifically hears herself not as the protagonist or as a devotee, but as an artist, who is made happy as a result of the musical system she is following, in a way which does not suggest the emotions of the lyrics as she described them earlier.⁵² In Chapter 3, I noted that Sharma pointed out a number of instances of word-painting while she listened to this performance. This, too, is a technical musical process and evidence of Sharma’s considerable expertise. In mentioning instances of word-painting, Sharma characterised her role on stage not as taking the part of the heroine, a character in the narrative, but rather as taking on the role of a narrator, more objectively describing the physical setting in which the *ṭhumrī* occurs.

Technical musical features and abstract processes afford a particular kind of engagement from the listener, which Sharma encouraged when she pointed them out to me. In noting technical features, she engaged (and invited me to engage) with her recording as evidence of her technical expertise rather than as an expression of the heroine’s lovesick longing or as a type of meditation. She thus identified herself with yet another gendered persona in her discussion of this *ṭhumrī*, the figure of the accomplished, classically trained, female singer.

I have already discussed the significance of a discourse of classicality in relation to *ṭhumrī*, noting its involvement in musicians’ attempts to raise the prestige of the genre and to minimise a damaging association between *ṭhumrī* and the courtesan tradition. This discourse carries specific significance in relation to the personal identities of female *ṭhumrī* singers. In the early twentieth century, women from non-courtesan backgrounds started to perform North Indian classical music professionally. Often married, and hailing from middle-class families, these respectable women faced little of the social stigma that surrounded courtesans. They usually affiliated themselves with lineages of male hereditary musicians and specialised in the classical genre *khyāl*, sometimes omitting *ṭhumrī* and other semi-classical genres entirely from their repertoires. Amlan Das Gupta has discussed “the emergence of women artists with gharana affiliations”. He notes a number of nineteenth-century instances in which women took training from male hereditary musicians, but suggests that a change occurred in the early twentieth century whereby women started acquiring the status *gharānā* artists, openly recognised as being of the same pedagogical lineage as their teachers. He also notes that at this time both middle class, respectable women *and* courtesans started demanding that their teachers “admit them within the gharana fold” (2005: 473-475). This made possible a completely new, respectable

⁵² This description is slightly contradicted by another description she gave of *laggī* in one of my lessons, where she explains its musical characteristics in terms of the changing emotions of the protagonist.

identity for female performers of North Indian classical music, with a very different status from that of the (increasingly disreputable) courtesan.⁵³ By emphasising technical, classical features in her performance, Sharma associates herself primarily with the prestigious identity of the respectable female classical (*gharānā*) musician, even while she sings a genre that is associated with courtesans.

Insofar as a classical training constitutes a type of education considered appropriate for women, this also ties in with Chatterjee's figure of the "new woman" of nationalist discourse, who was distinguished from the "common woman" in part by means of her education (1989: 628-9). Daniel Neuman has pointed out that the entry of respectable, middle-class women onto the concert stage grew out of nationalist formulations of music and of the ideal woman. He notes that one aspect of the discursive shift that accompanied the growth of nationalism and the music reform movement was a change in attitudes towards music education, especially for women, such that an education in music could be a source of pride for a respectable Indian woman. He highlights "the emergence of a public celebration of Indian civilisation", as a result of which North Indian classical music acquired "a respectable place in middle-class culture". As part of this development, he writes, "Young girls especially were expected to learn at least enough music so that when it came to arrange a marriage, the parents could assert their daughter's musical accomplishments and the future husband could dream of being serenaded by his bride" (1990 [1980]: 20). Janaki Bakhle traces the origins of these ideas in the nineteenth century, detailing in depth the discussions that surrounded changing views about music education for women (2005: 50-95). The eventual result of this, she notes, was that it has "[become] possible even for respectable middle-class Hindu housewives to imagine themselves as performers" (2005: 4), with the further consequence, Neuman points out, of an "increase in the number of female performers coming from 'respectable,' middle- and upper-class families", as opposed to the disreputable hereditary women performers of the past (207).

In the context of South Indian classical music, Amanda Weidman has made a similar argument about the relationship between music and emergent nationalist ideas about femininity there. She writes that "notions of classical music and musicianship became conflated with notions of ideal womanhood in 20th-century South India" (2003: 208). She discusses how, in the early decades of the twentieth century, music in South India become "domesticated", as the kind of activity that would be appropriate for respectable, modern wives to undertake in their free time. She describes music as a "bonding agent in a new type of ideal marriage", noting that it "had the advantage of being able to appear as both voluntary and at the same time deeply traditional" (210). It also "could serve as a spiritually uplifting domestic activity that would convert free

⁵³ Put differently, using vocabulary which I will introduce later in this chapter, one could say that the classically discourse about *thumrī* affords a new kind of subject position for female performers of the genre.

time into spiritual capital” (210). She writes, “Through its literal domestication, then, music would produce domesticity; classical music was seen as the soundtrack for the modern marriage and the modern home” (209). In South India, too, the figure of the female amateur musician overlaps significantly with the nationalist “new woman”, as an educated, devoted, religious wife. Professional female musicians in South India had to overcome similar prejudices to those faced by their counterparts in the North; Weidman highlights ways in which some professional women musicians used elements of nationalist discourses in order to improve their status. She notes, for example, that unmarried professional female musicians might align themselves discursively with characteristics of nationalist ideal womanhood, explaining the fact that they had not married by talking of their devotion to music above all else, implying, by extension, their devotion to “the preservation of Indian tradition” (199).

In describing the entry of respectable female classical musicians to the public tradition of North Indian classical music, Regula Qureshi suggests that this “new public tradition ... did not distinguish between male and female roles” (2006: 319). I would suggest, however, that this is not entirely the case. In the previous chapter, I have discussed some of the challenges faced by female performers, to which their male counterparts have been immune. While hailing from a family of hereditary musicians is a great source of pride and prestige for male musicians, any female musicians more normally emphasise that they do *not* come from musical families, so as to avoid any suspicion that they might belong to courtesan lineages. The role of classical musician is without gender to the extent that both male and female musicians appear in similar kinds of public concerts and sing similar musical material. However the challenges male and female musicians face within that tradition have been very different. Even in the early twenty-first century, the traces of an older gendered division of labour remain, in that most semi-classical specialists are women and the majority of the most famous classical singers and teachers are men. Janaki Bakhle notes that women musicians are rarely “admitted into [the] upper ranks” of the *gharānā* system (2005: 260). Moreover classical musicians exist within a wider social context with particular gendered expectations when it comes to, for example, dress and behaviour, which inflects their identity as musicians. I would suggest that it is best to view the identity of the female classical musician as a subset of the more general category of classical musician, with particular gendered characteristics alongside more general, not specifically gendered ones.

Slipping between different subject-positions

As she listened to and spoke about her own recording of the *thumrī*, “*He mā kārī badariyā barase*”, Sharma identified with a number of different gendered characters or personae, provoked by her engagement with the recording. She slipped easily and flexibly between them, depending on the associations which were evoked by the particular musical events that she

heard. In the next section, I will argue that this flexible way in which Sharma shifts between different identifications when listening to her own singing is similar to what happens when any knowledgeable listener listens to *ṭhumrī*. I will propose that these different gendered characters and associated models of femininity constitute distinct subject positions, which individuals may draw on in different ways and to different extents in order to cultivate their own, unique gendered identities. I will further suggest that Sharma's engagement with *ṭhumrī* during this interview can serve as a model for listeners' experience of musical performance more generally and that it can shed light on one possible way in which listening to music might have implications in terms of the social construction of gender.

Listening to *ṭhumrī*: music, subject positions and gender

Gender, semiotics and the subject

In Chapter 3 of this thesis, I borrowed theories from semiotics in order to account for the ways in which musical signs take on shared meanings within particular communities of musicians and listeners. In Chapter 4, I looked at the strategic role that musical signs can play within particular, socially constructed discourses about music and musicians. Semiotics can also help to make sense of the relationship between signs or groups of signs in the form of “texts” (including written literature, music and film) and the socially constructed identities of the people who interpret them.

In his introductory textbook on semiotics, Daniel Chandler notes the attention many semioticians have paid to theorising the way in which texts produce subject positions for their interpreters. He initiates his discussion with an explanation of some of the vocabulary these theorists employ: “In ‘theories of subjectivity’, a distinction is made between ‘the subject’ and ‘the individual’. While the *individual* is an actual person, the *subject* is a set of roles constructed by dominant cultural and ideological values (e.g. in terms of class, age, gender and ethnicity).” Thus any person is an individual, with a unique set of characteristics, behavioural habits, tastes and interests. That person, however, becomes a subject when he or she takes up socially constructed roles such as “mother”, boyfriend”, “Christian”, “perfect gentleman”, “teacher”, “dinner party guest”, “moody teenager”, “music-lover”, or, perhaps, “friendly person who comments on the weather at a bus stop”. Each of these roles involves different expectations regarding behaviour, for example. Chandler continues, “Ideology turns individuals into subjects. Subjects are not actual people but exist only in relation to interpretive practices and are constructed through the use of signs”. He goes on to note that “the humanist notion of a unified and consistent subject” has been undermined by, for example, the theories of Jacques Lacan, resulting in awareness of the fact that “the individual can occupy multiple subject positions,

some of them contradictory”. (For example, a single individual could potentially take on a number of roles from the list I mentioned above.) Chandler suggests that “‘identity’ can be seen as the interaction of subject-positions” (2007: 187).

Chandler then points out some of the implications of theories of subjectivity in the way in which semioticians describe the operation of texts. He writes that “according to theorists of textual positioning, understanding the meaning of a text involves taking on an appropriate ideological identity”, or, in other words, “in order to make sense of the signs in a text the reader is obliged to adopt a ‘subject-position’ in relation to it”.⁵⁴ He gives as an example of this an advertisement, which, in order to make sense, requires that the person seeing it adopt the position of a consumer who might subsequently wish to purchase the product it advertises. (The implication of this argument is that advertisements have the power to turn their viewers into consumers.) Just as scholars have critiqued the idea of a unified subject, so, Chandler writes, “contemporary theorists contend that there may be several alternative (even contradictory) subject-positions from which a text may make sense” (187).

Film theorists have dealt extensively with these issues, often taking explicitly semiotic approaches in order to consider how viewers relate to a film as they watch it. The film theorist Kaja Silverman, in her book on semiotics, draws upon the theories of the French linguist and semiotician Emile Benveniste in order to find vocabulary with which to theorise the way in which films condition types of subjectivity in their viewers. For the purposes of her study of cinema, she elaborates on a model developed by Benveniste in relation to language, by inventing the category of the “spoken subject” of a film, which is “the subject who is constituted through identification with the subject of ... the film” (1983: 47). Thus, she writes, “the cinematic text constitutes the viewer’s subjectivity for him or her; it engages the viewer in a discursive exchange during which he or she is spoken as a subject.” She continues, “To the degree that a given film conforms to dominant cultural values, it speaks the viewer’s subjectivity in familiar ways, and so creates the illusion of stability and continuity” (1983: 48). Teresa de Lauretis also takes a semiotic approach to the filmic construction of the subject in her book, *Alice Doesn’t: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (1984). She argues that “insofar as cinema is directly implicated in the production and reproduction of meanings, values, and ideology in *both* sociality and subjectivity, it should be ... understood as a signifying practice, a work of semiosis: a work that produces effects of meaning and perception, self-images and subject positions for all those involved, makers and viewers; and thus a semiotic process in which the subject is continually engaged, represented and inscribed in ideology” (37).

⁵⁴ Many such theories are ultimately derived from Louis Althusser’s essay, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” (2006 [1970]).

Film theorists, including Silverman, often talk about the process by which films condition or produce viewers' subjectivity in terms of "identification", describing ways in which the film might encourage its viewers to identify with one or more of the characters in the filmic narrative. (The assumption lying behind these discussions is that when a viewer watches a film, the viewer identifies with the protagonist of the film: if the protagonist is in danger, then the viewer is scared; if the protagonist achieves a happy ending, then the viewer is made happy; and so on.) Relating this process to ideas about ideology and the subject more broadly, scholars often write in terms of the "subject position" which a film might encourage its spectators to occupy. In their introductory textbook on film semiotics, Stam et al. write, "The concept of spectator-positioning, often referred to as subject positioning, is another way of referring to the way the spectator is "placed" in (and by) the text and made to assume roles based on identificatory participation" (1992: 157).

Some theorists have argued against the assumption that these identifications are necessarily singular, suggesting that viewers may identify with multiple characters (and therefore also take up multiple subject positions) as they experience a film. Janet Bergstrom writes, "After all the close work in film analysis that has led up to this point, it is now possible and absolutely necessary to complicate the question of identification as it functions in the classical film, first of all in terms of the realization that spectators are able to take up multiple identificatory positions, whether successively or simultaneously" (1979: 58). In her analysis of the role of film music in conditioning spectators' engagement with Hollywood films, Anahid Kassabian differentiates between films (and film soundtracks) based on whether they encourage "assimilating" identifications into a single subject position or multiple "affiliating" identifications, with a number of potential subject positions (2001).

Following the influential work of Laura Mulvey (1975), a number of feminist scholars have considered the gendered implications of the position(s) which a film encourages its spectator to occupy. These discussions have often focussed on the idea that identification might be patriarchal, such that spectators are normally encouraged to identify with a male character, while any female characters are presented as objects to be observed and desired. In response to this, there has been significant scholarly debate about the gendered implications of identification in film, including discussions of the role of female spectators of film and of possible differences between the ways in which men and women experience films as they watch (see for example de Lauretis 1988, Knight 1995, Waldman 1988, Hollinger 1998 and Saxton 1989).

In a discussion of the gendered position of films' spectators, Kaplan emphasises that no matter what identifications the film affords or encourages, the spectator's own life story will affect the way in which they engage with characters in the filmic narrative. She writes, "There is a delicate negotiation in any film reception between the hypothetical spectator offered by the film and the

reading formations of the viewer. Depending on the social practices through which this viewer is constructed, she or he will be more or less receptive to the hypothetical spectator-position of the film” (1985: 52).

Film theorists focus on the subject positions afforded by particular aesthetic objects. Other scholars have theorised the subject positions that might be constructed in discourse more broadly. In an essay on the acquisition of gendered identities, Bronwyn Davies considers how individuals take up subject positions within discourse, a process which involves “taking on *as our own* the very discursive practices through which we are constituted” such that we “[claim] authorship of the texts we speak” (1990: 506). She writes, “Our speaking writing ... can be understood as each of us mobilizing a variety of discourses within different contexts and for different purposes. We can take up and put down the different subject positions available within these discourses, our subjectivity always fluid and in process” (1990: 505). At a simple level, I might, for example, address a class of students in a way of speaking that is associated with teachers, thereby taking up the socially constructed role of “teacher” and provoking particular expectations regarding both my and the students’ subsequent behaviour. If, after the class, it is discovered that one of those students is in fact an old school-friend, we will likely cease to behave towards each other as teacher and pupil, instead adopting very different roles in relation to each other. (Other subject positions are more complex, and might include a variety of gendered and other attributes of which the people who take them up may not be conscious.) Emphasising the multiplicity of different subject positions that an individual might adopt, Davies writes, “Our energy will not be taken up with blocking out that which does not fit some imaginary ideal of the unitary, rational, non-contradictory self, but rather we can expand in the excitement of discovering *all* that we might be and of speaking that into existence” (1990: 505).

Coming from a different disciplinary perspective, the anthropologist Henrietta Moore has also theorised the relationship between socially constructed subject positions and gendered identities of the people who take them up. In her book, *The Subject of Anthropology*, Henrietta Moore brings together anthropology and psychoanalysis in order to consider “how we become sexed beings”, examining also “the consequences this has for an understanding of self, culture and power” (2007: 3). She argues that “individuals are multiply constituted subjects who take up multiple subject positions within a range of discourses and social practices.” She further notes that “some of these subject positions will be contradictory and conflicting, and individuals constitute their sense of self through several, often mutually contradictory, positions rather than through one singular position”. She further argues, however, that although “power and ideology ... may work to produce ... subject positions”, they “cannot determine how individuals will identify with and take up different subject positions at different times”. While one individual might be happy to play a particular, socially established role, another individual in the same

situation might not, and might attempt to resist or renegotiate it in various ways. Following Foucault, Moore highlights the creativity involved in this ongoing process of identity formation, stressing the ways in which individuals might engage in “self-stylization” or “self-making” (38). She argues that in order to theorise the “creative, interactive self”, a theory of the subject is required that should provide “a way of understanding how a complexly constituted self identifies with and/or resists and transforms subject positions available within a particular social, cultural, economic and political context” (41).

Moore notes the multiplicity even of individuals’ gendered identities; she writes, “Gender identities are not singular or fixed, but are made up of a series of subject positions proffered by the multiple discourses on gender which exist in any given historical context”, such that “subjects can identify with multiple gender positions, some of which may be conflicting and contradictory”. Thus, “one does not acquire a gender identity by acquiescing to a single model of masculinity and femininity, but rather by living the contrasts between them, including the spaces occupied by their difference and their similarities” (75). Moore highlights the different levels at which “multiple and fluid gender identities are maintained”, writing that this occurs “at the level of discourse, at the level of ideology, of spoken and enacted practices over time and at a day-to-day level”. She argues that “these forms of discourse are open to considerable contestation and renegotiation” and that “they provide multiple subject positions with which social agents can identify, and through which they can construct a sense of self over time” in a way which need not be conscious, but which may simply, for example, “form part of the agent’s ... way of being” (118). In the next section, I will consider what role music plays in conditioning the gendered subject positions with which individuals identify.

Musical subject positions

In her book *Music in Everyday Life*, Tia DeNora describes the opportunities music offers its listeners for the construction of personal identities. She theorises music as “an affordance structure”, which, she suggests, “allows for music to be understood ... as a place or space for ‘work’ or meaning and lifeworld making.” She describes a number of ways in which individuals make use of music in their lives, often in highly personal ways. She writes, “Music can ... be invoked as an ally for a variety of world-making activities”, describing it as “a resource for doing, being and naming the aspects of social reality, including the realities of subjectivity and self” (2000: 40). She substantiates these claims with detailed examples of how this might function in practice, based on sociological fieldwork in a variety of contexts. Noting the personal ways in which different people use music to create a sense of identity, she argues, “Music is a resource to which actors can be seen to turn for the project of constituting the self, and for the emotional, memory and biographical work that entails” (45). This resonates with

Davies' idea about how individuals develop a sense of self by taking up subject positions made available by discourses: DeNora's work suggests that music is one such discourse.

In a similar vein, Nicola Dibben has proposed that the act of listening to music makes possible the experience of particular kinds of subjectivity, which listeners can draw upon as they develop social identities; she has written of music's capacity to afford subject positions for its listeners.⁵⁵ In a discussion of the music of Bjork, for example, Dibben explores "the idea that music constructs positions for the listener to listen from"; she writes that music thereby "offers a way to experience emotion" (2006: 171), such that "the structuring of subjectivity that music affords comes to define one of the specific ways in which we learn how to experience and articulate emotion" (172). According to her argument, music plays a role in the social construction of emotion, by suggesting to its listeners a particular kind of emotional experience "as part of the production and maintenance of a particular form of subjectivity" (2006: 172). In another article, Dibben argues that the music of Pulp's album *This is Hardcore* constitutes a "critique of spectatorship", in part "through the subject position it solicits" (88), which "both encourages the listener to take up a voyeuristic relationship to its subject matter and simultaneously disrupts this very relationship by making the listener aware of his or her position as spectator" (2001: 105-6). Elsewhere Dibben has considered the gendered connotations of the particular subject positions which music affords. She examines "how ideologies of femininity are made material in music" (1999: 333), analysing the different ways in which femininity is represented in three pop songs. She suggests that each song contributes differently to the construction of gendered subjectivities, with the capacity to influence the way its listeners conceive of and experience gender.

This is similar to Susan McClary's argument in her book *Modal Subjectivities*, in which she proposes that "from around 1525 the Italian madrigal serves as a site – indeed, the first in European history – for the explicit, self-conscious construction *in music* of subjectivities" (2004: 6). Other scholars, too, have considered ways in which music might construct or afford subject positions for its listeners; others have discussed other types of relationships between music and subjectivity. They include Naomi Cumming (1997, 2000), Lawrence Kramer (2001), Eric Clarke (1999) and David Schwarz (1997). There is no space to discuss these here.

Sharma's shifting identifications

The work of Tia DeNora and Nicola Dibben, amongst others, suggests ways of applying to music the idea that an individual's identity might result from his or her adoption of specific

⁵⁵ Dibben does not define what she means by a musical "subject position". However, she uses the term in the same way as Eric Clarke, who defines it as "the way in which the general manner of a listener's response is directed or determined by material characteristics of the music" (1999: 351).

discursively created subject positions. This theoretical perspective offers a way of understanding how the different identities that Sharma assumes in her discussion of her performance might be related to her statement that she feels feminine when she sings *ṭhumrī* (mentioned in the introduction to this chapter). I would like to suggest that the different identities Sharma took on in relation to one of her own *ṭhumrī* recordings can be thought of as examples of discursively (including musically) produced subject positions. Sometimes Sharma took on the character of the protagonist of the *ṭhumrī*, a historical village girl. Sometimes she situated herself as a religious devotee and at other times as a classically trained singer. At still other times, not discussed here, she talked of her younger self and spoke of the innocence she heard in this previous performance, which she feels she has lost since growing up. These different positions represent different, sometimes overlapping and occasionally seemingly contradictory models of femininity. The identity of the urban, modern-day classical singer, for example, is very different from that of the uneducated, historical village girl. Both, however, are models of what it is to be a woman that circulate in the cultural imagination that surrounds *ṭhumrī*.

Sharma's engagement with this recording suggests that, for her, listening to a single *ṭhumrī* performance affords a number of different, differently gendered subject positions, which she identified with in turn. These are contingent, to a certain extent, on the musical features she hears, but also arise from her own experiences and memories. By temporarily identifying with these different types of femininity, Sharma is able to learn and explore different kinds of personal identities, accompanied by corresponding experiences of emotion. I suggest that her navigation of these different subject positions as she listens both informs and is informed by her experience of gender, offering ways of exploring and negotiating how to be gendered in a particular cultural context and providing resources from which to craft her own, unique gendered identity.

Other possibilities for identification in ṭhumrī

For Sharma, listening to *ṭhumrī* offered up a number of different possibilities for identification, each with different gendered implications. The different subject-positions which Sharma took up, however, do not represent an exhaustive inventory of all the positions available to audiences of *ṭhumrī*. Other listeners (including male listeners) may find very different possibilities for identification or engagement when they experience *ṭhumrī* in performance.

Lalita du Perron has discussed the ways in which *ṭhumrī*'s changing performance contexts affect the ways in which audiences relate to *ṭhumrī*'s performers, paying particular attention to changes in the genre's gendered significance. She describes performance of *ṭhumrī* in the courtesan's salon: there, she notes, a female performer would perform the genre to an all-male audience. She writes, "in the private space of the *mujrā*, the courtesan performed *ṭhumrī* with

the appropriate emphasis on emotional expression, voicing the heroine's longing for her lover as she charmed and enticed her male audience" (178). By acting out the role of the *nāyikā*, *ṭhumrī*'s lovesick heroine, a performer also "would have expressed (feigned or real) desire for her patron or a prospective client" (183). In what Perron describes as a "double-layered representation of the lyrics", "the courtesan represents the heroine of the *ṭhumrī* she is performing", while "the persona of the hero is projected onto whomever is being addressed in the audience" (191). In this situation, audience members are assumed to identify not with the heroine but with her absent lover. Perron points out that *ṭhumrī*'s lyrics afford this interpretation, since "the desire expressed by *ṭhumrī*'s lyrical heroine could readily be enacted by the *tavāyaf* in relationship to her prospective clients" (179). Perron also notes that this was particularly suited to the intimate environment of the courtesan's salon, which provided the necessary physical setting for the courtesan "to establish a personal relationship with her male audience" (191).⁵⁶

Perron argues that *ṭhumrī*'s move to the public concert hall (and the abolition of courtesans' salons) complicated the gendered identification of performer with heroine and male audience members with her lover. While in the salon female performers had performed *ṭhumrī* to all male audiences, in the concert hall *ṭhumrī* is sung by both male and female classical musicians to mixed audiences. As a result of this, Perron writes, "the identification of the female voice [of *ṭhumrī*'s heroine] with the performer has weakened" (189). She proposes that religious devotion now forms the primary interpretative frame through which musicians and audiences view the concert-hall-based *ṭhumrī*. (I have discussed the devotional discourse in relation to *ṭhumrī* earlier in this chapter and in the last.)

Noting that "the distinction between eroticism and devotion in North Indian art music is traditionally and famously indeterminate" (179), she suggests that this constitutes a sort of "disambiguation", in which a pre-existing tension inherent in *ṭhumrī*'s lyrics between religious and worldly significance is "forced into a one-interpretation-only mould", that is, a solely devotional one; she notes instances in which *ṭhumrī*'s lyrics were modified, so as to minimise any overtly erotic associations and confirm devotional ones (190). Perron discusses the implications of this interpretation of *ṭhumrī* in terms of the way in which the audience relates to the performer during the performance. She writes that "in the public and impersonal environment of the modern concert hall, the most viable interpretation of *ṭhumrī*'s romantic lyrics is on an impersonal level: rather than expressing the devotion and desire of one woman for one man, *ṭhumrī* is perceived as articulating the love of the female devotee for her god", such that the "performer and audience share the sentiments expressed in the text" (190).

⁵⁶ See also Neuman 1980: 222-223.

Perron's work highlights the importance of what she calls "contextual associations" (2002: 189) in informing the way in which audiences interpret and identify with *ṭhumrī* in performance. She identifies an overall shift in the way in which audiences engage with performers and performances, in line with a changing performance environment.⁵⁷ I would like to draw attention to further levels of complexity that exist in relation to the different subject positions which *ṭhumrī* makes available to its listeners throughout its history.

Perron emphasises a stereotypical model of the way in which male audience members would have engaged with a courtesan's performance, noting the capability of *ṭhumrī*'s lyrics to afford an interpretation in which the audience members viewed the performer as if she were the heroine and themselves assumed the identity of the heroine's lover. According to this model of engagement, audience members would have taken pleasure in imagining themselves to be the object of the performer's desire. There are, however, other possibilities for audience members' identification, even in the context of the courtesan's salon. Perron notes, for example, that *ṭhumrī*'s lyrics are characterised by a shifting mode of address, writing that "within one text a number of people may be addressed, usually the male protagonist and heroine's female friend". At other times, she writes, "the lyrical heroine appears to be addressing the audience of the *ṭhumrī* rather than a character from within the text" (181). This "variety of narrative receptors" (182) makes available a variety of subject positions for *ṭhumrī*'s audience. While one listener may indeed solely identify with the heroine's lover, *ṭhumrī*'s lyrics situate the listener more flexibly. When addressed as the heroine's friend, the listener is situated as a sympathetic third party. Furthermore, Perron notes that many *bandīs ṭhumrī* texts make use of rhetorical questions; she sees this "as a device aimed at establishing a level of mental interaction with the patrons, who are invited to engage with the heroine's dilemma" (179). This raises the possibility that audience members might also identify with the heroine herself at times during the performance.

Regula Qureshi has also discussed this possibility. She notes that the primary purpose of a courtesan's performance was that the patrons should experience love and the "essential emotional-spiritual nourishment that is inherent in music" in "a sensual gendered cultural experience for ... male patrons".⁵⁸ As such, "Aesthetically and affectively, [the courtesan's] listeners, her patrons, become her lovers, ardent, helpless, and silent." However Qureshi stresses that the way in which listeners might engage with the performance was more complex than simply by identifying with the heroine's theoretical lover and object of her desire. Describing the relationship between the courtesan's songs and her patrons, she writes that "her songs speak

⁵⁷ Amanda Weidman has discussed a parallel transition in South Indian contexts (2003: 210).

⁵⁸ This conception of musical performance has a long history (Schofield 2006).

for them as well as to them.” As well as constituting an object to be desired by the patrons, the courtesan also describes the experience of love, thus presenting the heroine herself as someone with whom love-sick audience members might identify. Thus Qureshi writes, “[the courtesan] is the voice not only of love ... but also of the lover, his suffering and his delights” (2006: 322).

Perron stresses the primacy of the devotional interpretation of modern-day *ṭhumrī* performances, which, she argues, “[enables *ṭhumrī*] to be relevant to modern life” (191). I would like to suggest, however, that there are further levels of complexity in the ways in which modern-day audiences interpret and engage with the genre. While many singers have indeed attempted to emphasise the devotional interpretation of *ṭhumrī* above all others (for reasons discussed in the last chapter), I would like to suggest that the ways in which audiences identify with *ṭhumrī* have remained multivalent and ambiguous, in line with *ṭhumrī*’s rich, polysemic nature. Even if singers discourage older modes of engagement, in which the performer is the object of the audience’s desire, this nevertheless remains one possible way amongst many for modern-day audiences to engage with *ṭhumrī*. Perron briefly acknowledges this when she notes the possibility that contemporary male audiences might be “tantalised by the woman-performer on stage” (191). Amongst music-lovers, there remains a palpable sense of nostalgia for courtesans and for *ṭhumrī*’s previous performance contexts. I discussed this earlier in this chapter. Given listeners’ awareness of courtesans, it seems unlikely that they would disappear entirely from their imaginations in the moment of performance, no matter how much a singer stressed the devotional nature of *ṭhumrī*. Furthermore, as I noted in the previous chapter, other singers do not stress this devotional aspect, and some (such as Rekha Surya) frequently talk openly about courtesans while introducing their performances. In Sharma’s comments on her own performance, she did not mention courtesans; however, she also did not solely identify with the performance within a devotional framework. She also spoke about the character of the love-sick protagonist and her own younger self, as well as alluding to the figure of the female classical musician.

Other listeners may engage variously with these as well as other personae, in response to the interpretations afforded or encouraged by particular musical features or the way in which musicians frame their performances, but also as a result of their own personal experiences and memories. Experiencing *ṭhumrī* in performance affords identification with a wide variety of different subject positions. Understanding *ṭhumrī* in a devotional framework, listeners might identify with the heroine, imagining her to be Radha or one of the *gopīs*, longing for the god Krishna. Alternatively a listener might understand the heroine to be simply a love-sick rural girl, located sometime in the distant past, who need not necessarily be a lover of Krishna. This listener might identify with the heroine in terms of her love-sick state, or perhaps as a devoted wife who unquestioning forgives her husband any wrongdoings. Another listener might hear in

thumrī the figure of the courtesan, a highly educated urban woman, probably located in nineteenth-century Lucknow. Yet another listener might focus on the modern-day singer, who is actually present at the performance. This might be a classical musician who primarily sings *khyāl* or a semi-classical specialist, each role carrying different stereotypical expectations. If the singer is famous, then the listener might hear in the performance (and potentially identify with) elements of the singer's own life story, perhaps relating any sadness expressed musically to sad events in the singer's life. In Chapter 4, I drew attention to certain musical features in *thumrī* which, I argued, appeal particularly to connoisseurs; I suggested that by using them, singers can cultivate a connoisseur-oriented musical style. For connoisseurs, *thumrī* affords a particular kind of expert listening. It thus makes available, at a more abstract level, the subject position of "the kind of person who listens to elite art music". Furthermore, as in the case of Sharma as she listened to her own performance and as theorised by film theorists, a single listener may switch between these different (or other) subject positions while listening to *thumrī*, depending partly on the particular connotations of the musical features he or she hears during the performance. Each of these different imagined personae (and the subject positions they represent) carries a variety of stereotypical associations, many of them gendered and related to particular, culture-specific models of gender.

Conclusion: listening as a thought-experiment

According to a newspaper review of a *thumrī* festival held in Delhi in March 2011, the photographer Avinasch Pasricha initiated discussion with the following set of questions:

Do men and women listen to thumri differently? Did the men in the auditorium identify only with the (imaginary) beloved who tormented the singer by spending the previous night with her souten [a rival lover]? Did women empathise solely with the protagonist pining for her beloved in a distant place perhaps her husband, or her babul (father)? (*Times of India*, 14th March 2011).

Unfortunately, the review does not provide any record of how this discussion continued.

In this chapter I have looked at the gendered connotations of *thumrī*, situating the genre within North Indian classical music more broadly by considering its relationship with the classical genres *khyāl* and *dhrupad*. I have also explored the gendered implications of the way in which a listener might experience *thumrī*. I have avoided making simplistic generalisations about the ways in which audience members' experience of *thumrī* might be conditioned by their gender. Nevertheless, I have argued that listening to *thumrī* can play a role in how individuals learn, appropriate and negotiate culture-specific gender norms. I focussed on one listener, the classical vocalist Sunanda Sharma, and examined the different gendered subject positions she occupied in relation to her one of her own performances, considering how they were conditioned by the

particular musical features she heard in that performance. I noted the way in which she slipped flexibly between these different and sometimes contradictory subject positions. I also suggested, following Tia DeNora and Nicola Dibben, that listening to music conditions identities in a way that involves a certain creativity on the part of the listeners, since it is possible to engage variously with the different subject-positions that music affords.

I would like also to suggest that this paradigm of listening subjectivity might offer a good model for what many listeners experience when they engage with this polysemic musical genre. In response to the questions posed at the start of this section, I would suggest that all of *ṭhumrī*'s listeners (both male and female) are offered a variety of possibilities for engagement when they listen to *ṭhumrī*. For both men and women, the music of *ṭhumrī* (including specific musical features) affords multiple (but not unlimited) possibilities for engagement and identification. Listeners can adopt a number of different subject positions over the course of the performance, depending partly on what they see and hear in the performance and partly also on their own experiences and memories, including their prior knowledge about *ṭhumrī*: these include subject positions which carry gendered cultural baggage. This is one of the ways in which models of gender circulate within particular social and cultural contexts, such that they are reproduced in listeners' imaginations, in the moment of the performance, through partly musical means. I propose that it might be useful to model listening to *ṭhumrī* as a kind of thought-experiment, in which a listener can explore different modes of engagement with different gendered characters and assume various gendered subject-positions, each offering up a variety of possibilities for how to enact and how to experience gender within certain, culturally established limits. It makes available to listeners an internal, affective experience of gender, through the powerful medium of music. Listening to music during performance thus serves as a way in which an individual can negotiate their personal, emotional engagement with normative gender ideologies. This involves the possibility of multiple types of engagement, including resistance and renegotiation, but within an ideological framework that is provided in advance. In this way the experience of musical performance itself functions as a mediator between gender norms and the intimate, highly personal identities of the people who listen.

In his essay "Who needs identity", the influential sociologist Stuart Hall has stressed the multiple nature of social identities; he writes, "Identities are ... points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us" (2000 [1996]: 19). In this chapter I have argued that music is one such discursive practice and that the subject positions it constructs are contingent even on subtle aspects of musical structure and style. I have focussed here on the subject positions afforded by *ṭhumrī* for one expert listener; *khyāl* and *dhrupad* would likely afford a variety of other subject positions for other listeners, too, which, as in *ṭhumrī*, may well be conditioned by the gendered connotations those genres evoke. Through

their musical decisions, as well as their behaviour on stage amongst other things, musicians can encourage or discourage certain types of identification over others; however, they can never fully dictate the different subject positions that different listeners will take in relation to their performances. Rather listeners can navigate flexibly amongst the multiple subject positions afforded by the musical performance.

This awareness makes possible a move from a performer-centred to a listener-centred style of musical analysis. Up until this chapter, this thesis has focussed analytically on the production of texts. I looked at the different meanings they evoke, anchored by social codes, and considered how those meanings might have affected the musical decisions of the singers who perform *ṭhumrī*. This chapter represents a shift in analytical emphasis, from producers to consumers; that is, it constitutes a shift in focus onto the listeners who experience *ṭhumrī* in performance, even if, as in this case, the producer and consumer are one and the same person, albeit separated by a gap of a few years. In considering how listeners engage with musical materials in order to create meanings, I have advocated a style of music analysis which considers what subject positions music affords its listeners. As Eric Clarke points out, this allows the analyst to “steer a middle course between the unconstrained relativism of ‘reader response theory’ (the idea that every perceiver constructs his or her own utterly individual and unpredictable meaning out of contact with an aesthetic object) and the determinism ... of rigid structuralism – the idea that meaning is entirely contained within the objective structures of the work itself” (1999: 352). This allows for an open-ended and flexible approach to music analysis; while it allows the analyst to consider how music constrains the possible interpretations available to listeners, it is also able to account for the music’s polysemy, both in terms of the possibility that different people might interpret a single musical performance differently but also that the same person may engage with it at multiple, simultaneously meaningful levels.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

In a recent article in *Ethnomusicology*, Gabriel Solis (2012) attempts to raise the profile of music analysis in ethnomusicology. There are two aspects to his argument. Addressing research practice, he makes the case that music analysis (or “theorizing about musical sound”) is a useful tool for ethnomusicologists. He also suggests that scholars would benefit from recognising that the analysis of musical sound occupies a central position within ethnomusicology as a discipline; he believes that “metatheoretical” discussions of ethnomusicology too often de-emphasise music theory and analysis, despite the fact that many important ethnomusicological studies already involve the close engagement with features of musical sound.

In insisting on the value of music analysis, Solis pays particular attention to the ways in which it can illuminate relationships between musical sound and the social context from which it emerges. He admits that a great deal of writing on the history of ethnomusicology already casts the genre as “an ‘interdiscipline’ combining anthropology and musicology in various ways as a starting point”. Despite the existence of this pervasive historical narrative, however, he laments a tendency in the discipline to “take one or the other area – the social or the musical – and address it at length, with by far the majority writing more prominently on the social than on the musical” (545). He is particularly concerned that ethnomusicologists do not sufficiently recognise the potential of music analysis to contribute usefully even to studies that are focussed primarily on the social aspects of musical performance; he believes, for example, that one major introductory work on ethnomusicology fails to demonstrate enough the potential for music theory and analysis to play a role “in answering anthropological questions” (546).

As examples of this potential, he points to a few recent studies in ethnomusicology whose authors “achieve a synthesis of the musicological and anthropological goals of the ‘interdiscipline’” (535): these include work by Marc Perlman, David McDonald, Frederick Moehn, Thomas Turino and Ingrid Monson, as well as his own work. He agrees with Perlman that “the more detailed our technical analyses, the more opportunities we will have to show how sounds and context are subtly intertwined” (1998: 68) and cites Monson where she argues that “detailed knowledge of musical processes is crucial in situating music within larger ideological and political contexts” (1999: 33). Solis also celebrates recent analytical work which brings in issues of cognition, the body and transmission (2012: 537-8).

Looking to the future, he suggests working from the starting point of Steven Feld’s statement that “sound structure is social structure”, which he takes to mean “not only that sound is socially

structured, but also that social life is sonically structured”; he believes that analysis is central to the project of trying to understand “music and society as mutually constitutive” (548). He concludes the article by suggesting that work which integrates analysis into the study of music and the social can form an important, uniquely ethnomusicological contribution to music research and the humanities in general (549).

With this thesis I hope likewise to have demonstrated that doing music analysis can enrich ethnomusicological research. I have explored a variety of ways of analysing the North Indian semi-classical vocal genre *thumrī*, focussing on performances from the second half of the twentieth century and the first few years of the twenty-first century. The different approaches I take are united in their focus on doing analysis “in context”; throughout the thesis, I combine transcription and analysis with the results of extensive ethnographic fieldwork, including numerous interviews and conversations with musicians and music-lovers, intensive vocal lessons and the study of musicological literature and newspaper reviews. By taking this contextualised approach to the analysis of musical sound, it was possible to link musical features with “extra-musical” meanings and to consider their social significance. In line with Solis’ argument, my particular aim in doing this research was to indicate how analysis can shed light not only on abstract, structural features of music, but also on the kinds of social issues in which ethnomusicologists tend to be most interested.

Analysing *thumrī* “in context”

Each chapter of this thesis demonstrates different ways in which the musical features of *thumrī* are related to the particular social, cultural, historical and economic contexts in which it is created and performed. In Chapter 2 I discussed the formulas that musicians use when they perform *thumrī*. I accounted for them in part by linking them with the contexts in which *thumrī* is performed and transmitted; this entailed exploring the connection between musicians’ use of formulas and the demands of producing extempore musical performances in oral traditions. I also considered possible social influences on the types of formulas that occur in *thumrī*. This drew on theories developed by the linguist Alison Wray, who has argued that formulaicity in language is a product of a variety of factors, both psychological and social. For example, I drew attention to what I called a “premium on variation” in *thumrī*. In line with work by John Napier (2006), I argued that it offers a way for musicians to resolve two, seemingly contradictory social pressures that act on them: on the one hand, they must appear to remain true to their teacher and their *gharānā* heritage by not diverging too far from the tradition they have been taught but on the other hand they must simultaneously demonstrate their status as artists in their own right by showing musical originality in performance. I suggested ways in which this

premium on variation can both contribute to the explanation of why formulas occur in *ṭhumrī* at all and can account for why musicians favour particular formulas in *ṭhumrī* over others.

In Chapter 3 I examined the shared associations that *ṭhumrī* evokes for cultural “insiders” in communities of musicians and listeners; here I borrowed theories from semiotics in order to model particular musical features as signs and thereby consider how music becomes meaningful in a particular cultural context. I discussed the power of aspects of *ṭhumrī*’s musical sound to conjure up a network of (stereotypical) images and associations that exist in the discursive world surrounding the genre. A particular florid and melismatic figure, for example, can function as the sonic depiction of a bird’s flapping wings. This, in turn, evokes a rural environment which, for knowledgeable listeners, is primarily imagined as being located sometime in the past; such listeners will likely also be reminded by this musical device of the recurring theme in *ṭhumrī* lyrics of a lovesick heroine who is reminded of her absent lover by the sound of birdsong. Lalita du Perron (2007: 10-14)) has made a similar point in relation to *ṭhumrī* lyrics, noting that even a single word can evoke a world of associations surrounding the genre; in this chapter I argued that *ṭhumrī*’s musical features, too, have that same capability. I would suggest that sign function is the fundamental mechanism by which aspects of musical sound become linked with non-musical ideas; adopting a semiotic perspective offers a powerful way of understanding how *ṭhumrī*’s musical features are connected with the shared ideas that surround the genre in the imaginations of its performers and listeners and which they articulate when they talk or write about it. In this chapter, I link music with its context by considering the nature of musical meaning; I show how the discourse surrounding *ṭhumrī* fixes the meanings of particular musical features in instances of cultural framing.

Relationships between music and the social were the central focus of Chapter 4. Building on the previous chapter, where I considered how musical features can take on extra-musical associations, in Chapter 4 I explored the social significance of *ṭhumrī* style. I showed ways in which musical features are related to competing, socially situated sets of arguments about *ṭhumrī*, each with different implications in terms of the prestige and respectability of the genre. I considered how musicians and connoisseurs might take up and mobilise these different arguments in line with their own, individual social agendas. I suggested that social strategies also influence musicians’ musical decisions. I demonstrated this with reference to the *ṭhumrī* style of the renowned vocalist Girija Devi, arguing that the unique stylistic characteristics of her *ṭhumrī* renditions form part of an attempt to raise both her own personal social status and the status of the genre within North Indian classical music. In doing so, I showed how aspects of musical sound can function discursively: that is, I argued that music itself operates alongside language as part of the discourses that circulate in a particular cultural context.

Finally in Chapter 5 I explored one social aspect of music in depth, focussing on the relationship between music and gender. I looked at some of the implications of the common impression amongst musicians and listeners that *ṭhumrī* is a feminine genre. I explored how *ṭhumrī*'s musical features might be related to that interpretation. I then considered how music might play a role in the ongoing social construction of gender, by affording particular experiences of gender for its listeners. Here I focussed on the reactions of one singer to one of her own performances, suggesting that these offer a model for listeners' experience of *ṭhumrī* more generally.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 all involved a consideration of *ṭhumrī*'s extra-musical meanings, but considered in successively broader contexts. In Chapter 3 I focussed on the way in which listeners construct *ṭhumrī* as meaningful in relation to its lyrics. In Chapter 4 I looked at the wider social significance of musical features and their relationship with musicians' strategies to improve their status within North Indian classical music. Finally in Chapter 5 I explored the relationship between music and gender, looking at music's role in the broadest of social processes

In advocating what I have called "analysis in context", I have used the expression to refer to two different but related ideas. First, I use it to describe my research methodology, which combines the transcription and analysis of recordings with ethnographic and archival research into the context from which those recordings emerge. Second, "analysis in context" describes the analytical agenda I take throughout the thesis, where I consider how music participates in and is affected by the contexts of its performance, including broad social, historical and economic contexts. I would suggest that it is the first type of "analysis in context" that makes the second possible. Combining close musical analysis with ethnographic fieldwork has allowed me in this thesis to explore multiple links between the sound and the context of *ṭhumrī*: amongst other things, it has made it possible to tie *ṭhumrī*'s musical style to considerations of gender, prestige, respectability, spirituality, orality and connoisseurship.

A multifaceted analytical approach

Taken as a whole, this thesis presents a multifaceted approach to the analysis of *ṭhumrī*. I apply different analytical lenses to the genre in each chapter in order to discuss a variety of aspects of *ṭhumrī* style over the last fifty years. This ecumenical attitude to analysis has a number of advantages. A common criticism of music analysis is that in the attempt to reveal musical patterns, analysts frequently end up ignoring or stripping away many of the features that

musicians and listeners consider most important.⁵⁹ By successively applying different analytical lenses to the same subject matter in a single study, it is possible to focus on (and then alternately to ignore) different aspects of the music in turn. This avoids potential limitations of adopting an analytical method that focuses only on a single musical parameter; here, it has enabled me to give a better, more complete picture of *ṭhumrī* than any single approach alone would have done. This reflects the complex and multifaceted nature of *ṭhumrī* itself, which has proved well-deserving of in-depth analytical attention.

Adopting a multifaceted approach to *ṭhumrī* has made it possible to account for a variety of its features and to consider the range of social, psychological and other factors that influence its musical style. For example, this approach has made it possible to show how *ṭhumrī*'s musical structure is affected by the nature of human memory and by the way in which the genre is taught, learned and practised; at the same time, it has revealed the complexity of the relationships between *ṭhumrī*'s musical sound and the discursive world in which it is embedded.

Although I explore a different perspective on *ṭhumrī* in each chapter, the different arguments I make nevertheless overlap across the chapter boundaries in significant ways. In addition to the analytical richness it affords, a further advantage of taking a multifaceted approach to analysis is that juxtaposing different analytical perspectives can reveal the connections between them. The order of the chapters within the thesis reflects the fact that each chapter builds on the ones that precede it. In Chapter 2 I suggested that formulas are best viewed as the building blocks of *ṭhumrī*; the idea that *ṭhumrī* performances are made up of collections of musical formulas serves as a starting point for the way I analyse the genre throughout the thesis and cuts across all of the subsequent chapters. There is overlap between the formulas I identify in Chapter 2 and the signs I discuss in Chapter 3: some musical signs in *ṭhumrī* are also examples of musical formulas. (Sigh figures, for example, are both recurring musical gestures and evocative emotional signifiers. Word-painting, likewise, can be viewed as a special type of formulaic musical strategy.) Whereas describing such features as formulas helps to explain how musicians use them in constructing their performances, describing them as signs can make sense of how they take on meaning for their performers and listeners. Certain formulas also form part of the collections of features that I identify as socially strategic (in Chapter 4) and as carrying gendered significance (in Chapter 5).

In addition, the issues I discuss in Chapter 3, 4 and 5 can influence *how* formulas occur in *ṭhumrī*. Social strategies, for example, can affect the types of formulas that musicians favour in

⁵⁹ Schenkerian analysis is frequently the main target of this complaint. Since it focuses on large-scale pitch structures, it is often criticised for ignoring issues of timbre, rhythm and dynamics and the moment-to-moment events that make up a performance; it also offers no way of taking into account music's "extra-musical" meanings and connotations, nor the social factors that affect the way music is constructed.

performance and the extent to which they use formulas at all. Musicians who wish (for reasons related to prestige or authenticity) to convey their indebtedness to their teacher or their legitimate membership of a particular pedagogical lineage would likely make heavy use of formulas characteristic of that teacher or lineage in order to serve that particular social end. A musician who wished to convey his or her iconoclastic originality might use far fewer formulas in performance.

Just as the idea that *ṭhumrī* performances can be analysed as collections of formulas serves as the foundation for my analysis throughout the rest of the thesis, so the notion that aspects of *ṭhumrī*'s music can function as signs with the capacity to evoke extra-musical meanings, introduced in Chapter 3, is the basis on which I link music with social strategies in Chapter 4 and with ideas about gender in Chapter 5. Meanwhile the way in which performers (and listeners) construct *ṭhumrī* as meaningful, emphasising relationships between *ṭhumrī*'s sound and its lyrics (as discussed in Chapter 3), can be viewed as socially strategic; when, for example, musicians or listeners emphasise the role of *ṭhumrī*'s music in depicting the emotions of a lovesick heroine or in representing aspects of the natural world, their statements are linked with ideas about connoisseurship, expertise and the necessity of maintaining a boundary between classical and semi-classical genres. Both musicians' and connoisseurs' opinions about the meaning of *ṭhumrī*'s music are informed by their particular social agendas.

There are numerous connections between the arguments I make in Chapters 4 and 5. The social strategies that musicians employ in relation to *ṭhumrī* (Chapter 4) are closely connected with issues of gender (Chapter 5), since *ṭhumrī*'s disreputable, less-than-fully-classical reputation is a result of its association with a stigmatised group of female performers (courtesans). This places female singers in a particularly precarious social position and renders *ṭhumrī*'s feminine character problematic for musicians both male and female. As I discussed in relation to Girija Devi in Chapter 5, many of the musical-discursive strategies that singers adopt have gendered implications.

In Chapter 5, I introduced terminology surrounding the idea of "subject positions". This provides alternative vocabulary for describing many of the other things I discuss in the thesis. In Chapter 4, for example, I suggested that certain musicians cultivate what I call a "connoisseur-oriented" style in their *ṭhumrī* performances, prioritising in particular those musical features which appeal to connoisseurs; I noted that this is a socially strategic musical move, designed to help musicians gain favour with an important and powerful group of listeners. Another way of describing this situation would be to say that in order to appeal to high-status audience members, musicians must provide those individuals the musical (and more broadly the discursive) material which makes it possible for those listeners to take up the subject position of "connoisseur", an identity which has a high social status.

Just as the arguments I make in each chapter overlap in various ways such that they are not fully independent of each other, so the particular musical features I discuss in each chapter of not independent of each other, either; rather they overlap and interact in complex, multileveled musical performances. One particular musical phrase might be both a stock expression, used often by a particular musician whenever he or she sings a particular *rāg* (as discussed in Chapter 2) and also an instance of word-painting, meant to evoke heavy rain (as discussed in Chapter 3). It might therefore be used by a musician in order to prove his or her expertise in *ṭhumrī*, by demonstrating that musician's awareness of the importance of singing music appropriate to lyrics of the composition, as part of a wider social strategy (as discussed in Chapter 4). Alternatively, as part of a different social strategy, it may also form part of an instance of *visṭār*, perhaps used by the singer in order to create a serious atmosphere for *ṭhumrī* by emphasising classical features in *ṭhumrī* performances (Chapter 4). Furthermore, that same musical phrase might also involve the use of particular ornamentation associated with *ṭhumrī*, aimed at evoking a sense of delicate femininity, in line with broader, culture-specific gender norms (see Chapter 5).

e mā kāṛī badariyā barase (revisited)

Figure 6.1 demonstrates some of this complexity. It is a full transcription of Sunanda Sharma's performance of the *ṭhumrī* "*He mā kāṛī badariyā barase*". I have referred to this particular performance throughout the thesis, including, most significantly, in Chapters 3 and 5, where I discussed Sharma's own responses to her performance when I played it to her in interview.

It is performed in *rāg Deś*. This is one of the few *rāgs* which is used in performances of both *ṭhumrī* and *khyāl*. Despite its appearance in both classical and semi-classical performances, it does not evoke especially classical connotations. (When Sharma first taught me this *rāg*, she did so by teaching me a *kajrī*, a light genre which is even less classical than *ṭhumrī*.)

The *tāl* of this performance is a fairly fast *tīntāl*. For Sharma, this is a particularly upbeat *ṭhumrī* performance; the many *ṭhumrīs* I have heard her sing in performance and in my own lessons tend to use a much slower underlying metre than this rendition. The fast tempo here gives the metered section of the performance a fairly light feel, uncharacteristic for Sharma. (This is exaggerated by the fact the passages of *bol banāo* text elaboration here are quite short, punctuated by frequent returns to the material of the composition; at the start of the metered section, most of what she sings consists merely of varied versions of the first line of the composition, reminiscent of the way in which Sharma sings light genres.) However any impression of a lack of seriousness that might derive from the metered portion of this performance is offset by its lengthy unmetered introduction. This is an extremely long and

leisurely introduction for a *ṭhumrī* performance. The subsequent fast pace of the *ṭhumrī* might be a result of the fact that Sharma had already dispensed with the necessary seriousness in the introduction. There are other factors, too, which might account for the uncharacteristically upbeat nature of this performance: it is preceded on the CD by a *khyāl* performance which, like the long introduction, may have provided all the seriousness Sharma felt was necessary for a single recording. It is also possible that this recording reflects a more youthful style than the one which I got to know when I studied with Sharma almost a decade after she had recorded this CD. Nevertheless, this performance demonstrates many of the important aspects of Sharma's *ṭhumrī* style.

I have annotated my transcription of this performance so as to be able to discuss occurrences of the different musical features I discuss in this thesis. In particular I focus here on four aspects of this performance and Sharma's responses to it: formulas of various types (Chapter 2); signs (Chapter 3); social strategies (Chapter 4); and the different subject positions Sharma took up as she listened to this recording in interview (Chapter 5). This performance demonstrates how the some of the different elements of *ṭhumrī* that I discuss in this thesis might play out in single performance by a master musician.

Formulas

In Chapter 2 I discussed different types of formulas in *ṭhumrī*. In this performance, Sharma uses a variety of these different formulaic building blocks; frequently, these overlap each other in complex ways. In this performance, Sharma frequently ends phrases with what I called "sigh figures" (falling in both pitch and volume) that trace the outlines MGR and NDP, often involving a slight pause on the M or N. These particular types of sigh figures use the same pitches each time they occur and are therefore examples of what I called "stock expressions" in Chapter 2. Since they occur most frequently at the ends of phrases and phrase-units, they acquire "ending" function (also discussed in Chapter 2). I have marked such instances of the ending figures MGR and NDP on the transcription with circled letters above the staff. Sometimes Sharma extends these figures, so as to produce MGRGR or NDPDP (for example at 00:55 to 01:05 or at K1: 4): I have also marked this with circled letters above the staff.

The figure MGR forms part of a longer melodic outline (see Chapter 2 for my definition and discussion of "melodic outlines"), with a stronger ending function even than the figures MGR or NDP alone. While MGR and NDP occur at the ends of phrases or phrase-units, this melodic outline occurs at the end of much larger structural units and eventually at the close of the entire performance. This first occurs at the end of the first section of the *ālāp*. Here, it consists of three successive phrase-units. First, Sharma sings a florid version of the MGR figure, with a long pause on M; then, she traces the outline GRS , with a pause on G; finally, she concludes with

an ornamented version of the figure S. This figure is shown with boxed letters above the staff, coloured green for clarity. When the MGR figure appears as part of this longer outline, the relevant letters appear in both circles and boxes. (This ending outline had already been foreshadowed by a compressed version, from 00:25, where Sharma sings MGR and then GRS S; here, however, this does not achieve any sense of final closure, as Sharma immediately interrupts herself with a MGR sigh figure.) Sharma sings the next version of this ending melodic outline at the close of the *ālāp*, from 03:00. Another version of it appears in T: 1-2, compressed so that it only consists of two phrase-units. She sings yet another compressed version at N1: 1-3. Finally it appears once again in three-part form at the very end of the performance, from 15:30. A version of this melodic outline, like the MGR stock expression, appears in the summary outline of *rāg Deś* in Joep Bor's *The Raga Guide*. Here it occurs in a two-part form and consists of the pitches ^PD^PMGR, followed by ^RG^{RS} S. Further investigation would be required to ascertain whether the three-part version of this melodic outline, which Sharma seems to favour at the close of large-scale structural units, is an idiomatic feature of Sharma's renditions of *rāg Deś* alone, or whether other musicians, too, make use of both the two-part and three-part versions of this ending outline.

Another “stock expression” that occurs in this performance, mentioned in Chapter 5, is a figure that occurs in the middle of phrases and consists of the pitches P P , where the is unexpectedly quieter than the surrounding notes. I have marked this on the transcription with circled letters above the staff. I have not marked any other recurring “stock expressions” on this transcription, though others do appear. See for example the recurrence of a circling figure around , consisting of a pause on and then N , at G2:3-4 and A3:2. Alternatively see the last six notes of S1:2, which spell out the melodic contour 323212, anticipating the transposed versions of the same contour in U1: 2-3. Sharma also makes use of this particular 323212 contour in her *thumrī* renditions in *rāg Khamāj*. When she was teaching me to sing the *Khamāj thumrī*, “*Itnī araja morī mān*”, she told me to memorise one particular phrase she had thought up, which also involved successively transposed versions of this contour. I have not compared this performance with others by Sharma in *rāg Deś*, since she has not yet released any other recordings in this *rāg*; however, it seems likely that comparison with a number of other performances in *rāg Deś* by Sharma would reveal even more recurring stock expressions and melodic outlines in this performance.

As well as stock expressions and melodic outlines (sometimes with beginning, middle or ending functions), this performance also contains instances of some of the other types of formulas I discussed in Chapter 2. There, for example, I noted instances of what I labelled recurring “gestures” in *thumrī* performances. I labelled one such gesture “downward chromatic sliding”. One instance of this occurs here, from I2: 1 to I2: 4. It is labelled with boxed text above the

staff, coloured in purple. Also, I have marked on the transcription instances of another formulaic gesture, not discussed on Chapter 2. This consists of an accelerating gesture that oscillates between two adjacent pitches. I have marked instances of this on the transcription with the boxed text “oscillating gesture” above the staff, coloured in purple.

Above I noted Sharma’s use of a particular kinds sigh figure which uses the pitches MGR and NDP, highlighting them as examples of stock expression in this performance. In that they involve overall melodic shapes, sigh figures in general are instances of “musical gestures”. Sharma uses a variety of types of sigh figures in this performance, some of which use pitches other than MGR and NDP. I have marked some of the most pronounced instances of sigh figures on the transcription with hairpins. Sometimes Sharma uses different pitches to create sigh figures at the ends of phrases in this performance: note another recurring sigh figure here, which uses the pitches N N P and occurring after a pause on (see for example W2: 3-4 and C3: 3). I have not attempted to mark any of the other changes in volume in this performance, although they are surely also worthy of investigation. (One other feature of the dynamics of this performance, for example, is Sharma’s tendency to swell in volume whenever she sings : this, itself, might well constitute another recurring formula in Sharma’s performances.)

I have also highlighted some instances of abstract musical strategies in this performance. On a number of occasions, Sharma makes use of “transposition strategies” in this performance. (These transposition strategies are reminiscent of the successively transposed figures that occur in *khyāl tāns* and are common in both the *thumrī* performances of Sharma and those of Girija Devi, her teacher.) Note that one of these passages (from U1:2 to V1), contains the recurring melodic contour 323212, discussed above. Thus the melodic unit which forms the object of this musical strategy itself functions here as a formula in its own right. I have marked instances of transposition strategies with pink boxed text on the transcription. I have also marked with pink boxed text instances of what I call “rhythmic staggering”, another abstract musical strategy, in which rhythmic units are staggering against the underlying metre so as to create syncopation-like effects. Sometimes, a particular melodic unit might be successively transposed so as to be staggered against the underlying metre, thus creating passages involving both transposition and rhythmic staggering strategies simultaneously (for example at Q2:3-4).

I have already noted the pervasive presence of the stock expressions MGR and NDP at the end of phrases in this performance. In a number of places, Sharma uses the figures MGR and NDP at the ends of *successive* phrase-units in instances of what, in Chapter 2, I labelled an “end-rhyme strategy”. This occurs, for example, in an extended passage from S to B1:2, in which almost every phrase-unit ends with the figure, MGR. From K1 to M1:2, meanwhile, Sharma uses the figure NDP to create end-rhyme between successive phrase-units. This indicates one way in which different types of formulas can overlap. When dispersed through a performance or

across a number of performances, figures like these, repeated verbatim, function as stock expressions. When, however, a musician uses them at the ends of successive phrases, they can produce instances of a different type of musical formula: the strategy I label “successive variation”.

Signs

The purpose of this transcription is not only to show formulas in this performance, but also to show some of the other musical features I identify in the thesis. This performance also contains examples of musical signs. In Chapter 3 I noted two instances of word-painting in this performance, based on Sharma’s comments to me when we listened together to the recording. These occurred at I: 1 and Q2: 3 to R2: 1; Sharma’s comments on these two musical events are transcribed in unboxed text above the staff. In addition, I have already noted Sharma’s use of sigh figures in this performance in the section on formulas, above. (They are shown with hairpins under the staff.) In Chapter 3 I argued that sigh figures function as signs in *ṭhumrī* and that they carry strong emotional connotations for musicians and listeners.

Social strategies

In Chapter 4 I briefly considered the kinds of social strategies that might influence Sharma’s performance style, comparing her style with that of her teacher (Girija Devi). I noted for example, that she, like Devi, paints a classical picture of *ṭhumrī* and that she also emphasises its especially emotional nature. I argued that the particular strategy she takes in relation to *ṭhumrī* is appropriate to her position as a young, respectable woman (not tainted by any family association with courtesans), who comes from a pedagogical lineage particularly known for *ṭhumrī*.

Social strategies are too abstract to identify in specific places on the transcription; nevertheless this performance is a good representation of Sharma’s (socially strategic) views about *ṭhumrī*. In the section on formulas, above, I discussed Sharma’s frequent use of the ending figures MGR and NDP, noting their role as stock expressions and showing how Sharma uses them in order to create end-rhyme in longer passages of music. Sharma’s use of these phrases carries further significance in terms of the arguments she makes about the classical seriousness of *ṭhumrī*: ending phrases with MGR or NDP is one of the characteristic features of *rāg Deś*. See, for example, the melodic outline for this *rāg* in Joep Bor’s authoritative book, *The Raga Guide* (1999: 60). In this performance, Sharma demonstrates her mastery of this classical *rāg*, even while she is singing a semi-classical genre. Sharma’s careful use of *vistār* (discussed in Chapter 5) adds to this impression. Meanwhile the high frequency of sigh figures here is in keeping with Sharma’s feelings that *ṭhumrī* is an especially emotional genre.

Subject positions

In Chapter 5 I discussed Sharma's comments on this *ṭhumrī* at length, analysing the model of listening subjectivity they represent. I have marked on figure 6.1 some of Sharma's comments as she listened to this performance. In particular, I have marked with (unboxed) text above the staff those particular comments which I highlighted in Chapter 5 as evidence of the different subject positions she adopts. (There was not space to include all of her comments on this transcription.) Where I read her comments as related to her adoption of the subject position of the protagonist of the *ṭhumrī*, I have coloured them red. Where I interpreted them as evidence of her identification with the position of an accomplished classical musician, I have coloured them green. Where they constituted instances of Sharma's identification with her younger self, I have coloured them orange. Where they implied the subject position of religious devotee, I have coloured them blue. Some of these comments also relate to discussions earlier in the thesis, such as my discussions of word-painting and *pukār* in Chapter 3.

One figure, many interpretations: intersections and overlap

One advantage of an annotated transcription such as this is that it shows how some of the different features I identify in the different chapters of my thesis in fact occur simultaneously, in a single performance by a master musician. Even at a very close, local level, any one musical feature can afford a number of different interpretations simultaneously.

I have already noted the way in which sigh figures can be interpreted differently, according to the different analytical frames in which they are viewed. As well as being instances of recurring musical formulas (as I discussed in Chapter 2), sigh figures also function as signs, carrying particularly strong emotional connotations (Chapter 3). Furthermore, their use confirms rhetorical arguments about the emotional nature of *ṭhumrī*, which some musicians make as part of wider social strategies (Chapter 4). Thus Sharma's frequent use of sigh figures in this performance is the musical corollary of her argument that *ṭhumrī* is an especially beautiful genre in part because of its extremely emotional character, which renders it just as important and worthy of attention as the classical genres *khyāl* and *dhrupad* (Chapter 4). They are also significant in terms of gender (Chapter 5); they characterise *ṭhumrī*'s heroine according to a particular, culture-specific model of femininity. Moreover when Sharma listens back to them, they are particularly likely to cause her to identify with that heroine, taking up a gendered subject position.

The figure that Sharma sings to the word "*papīhā*" in Q2: 3 to R2: 1 provides another example of this analytical multivalency. It is an instance of what I have labelled the "transposition strategy", since it involves a particular collection of pitches transposed successively downwards. It is also an example of "word-painting", which is both a type of formulaic musical strategy and

a musical sign. It is potentially implicated in broader social strategies, too: as an example of word-painting, it is a demonstration of Sharma's expertise in *ṭhumrī* and her knowledge of the kinds of situations which singers customarily use to show their understanding of the intimate relationship between *ṭhumrī*'s music and its lyrics. It is also a fast, virtuosic figure, which functions as a display of Sharma's technical accomplishments and is proof of Sharma's many years of training. This one figure could potentially be described according to a variety of other analytical narratives, too; no one analytical lens is capable of fully accounting for the musical and social work it accomplishes in this performance. In annotating this transcription, I have not attempted to produce an exhaustive inventory of everything of note in this performance, nor even of all those musical features which are relevant to my discussions of *ṭhumrī* in this thesis. I have not, for instance, highlighted Sharma's use of *vistār* in this *ṭhumrī*, though it informs the progress of much of the performance. Rather with this analysis I hope to suggest some of the possible avenues a scholar might take when analysing *ṭhumrī* performances. I would suggest, also, that it demonstrates some of the benefits of a holistic style of analysis, in which the scholar is aware of multiple types of (internal) musical features, all related differently to the (external) contexts of *ṭhumrī* performance.

Future avenues

Taking a multifaceted, contextualised approach to *ṭhumrī* in general and to this performance in particular has revealed that *ṭhumrī* is a musically sophisticated genre, fully deserving of in-depth analytical attention, whose singers exercise great mastery in the way they weave together different types of musical formulas in performance. It has shown *ṭhumrī* to be a complex field of musical signification, in which music and lyrics come together to evoke a historical pastoral idyll, religious devotion and also the courtesans' salon and feudal performances of time gone by, and which connoisseurs value for the richness of its musical semiosis. Meanwhile it has revealed a network of relationships between *ṭhumrī*'s sound and its discursive context, so that stylistic decisions become a means by which musicians enact social strategies, aimed at improving their status within North Indian classical music and society more broadly. Finally this approach has revealed that the music of *ṭhumrī* is deeply embedded in even broader social processes, participating, for example, in the social construction of gender.

Nevertheless this analytical project remains unfinished; there are many other potentially useful angles from which to view *ṭhumrī* style. I did not address issues of embodiment or gesture, despite their importance in North Indian classical music and the existence of some very promising recent work in the area (see for example Clayton 2007, Leante 2009 and Rahaim 2012). Most of this work has focussed on classical performances, but it would be very

interesting to pursue these ideas in relation to *ṭhumrī*. Gesture is an important factor in the way in which musicians and audiences construct musical meaning and is therefore related to a number of issues I discuss in this thesis. It would seem highly likely, for example, that musicians' gestures would be significant from the perspective of social strategies and gender. I also did not take the opportunity in this thesis to analyse *ṭhumrī* using any specific pre-existing analytical techniques, such as Schenkerian analysis. Likewise this may also prove a promising angle for future analysis of the genre. I would suggest that one of the most important advantages of adopting a multifaceted approach to the analysis of *ṭhumrī* is in its potential to incorporate ever more analytical methods in the future.

In addition many of the analytical avenues I explore in this thesis themselves hold potential for future study. My discussion of formulas in Chapter 2 was an introductory survey of the types of formulaic material that appear in *ṭhumrī*, along with an attempt to account for their presence; I argued that formulas play a crucial role in enabling improvising musicians to generate large-scale, complex musical utterances on the spur of the moment and that they are the key to understanding the nature of improvisation in *ṭhumrī*. Formulas in *ṭhumrī* and beyond deserve further attention. In particular, it was beyond the scope of this study to consider the role of formulas in *khyāl* or *dhrupad*, the two main genres of North Indian classical vocal music. Future research could look in greater depth at formulas in *ṭhumrī* or at formulas and processes of improvisation in North Indian classical music more broadly.

It would be valuable, for example, to investigate how formulas might characterise different musical styles, in *ṭhumrī*, *khyāl* and *dhrupad*, analysing the extent to which different musicians and pedagogical schools utilise unique, idiomatic formulaic vocabularies. This would make it possible to address questions about the role that formulas play in the transmission of musical knowledge from teacher to pupil, in an orally transmitted musical tradition. Sharma's "*He mā kārī badariyā barase*", discussed above, contains a number of instances where different types of formulas are nested within each other or overlap, sometimes at different structural levels. A thorough examination of the distribution of formulas over a number of complete performances could shed light on the way in which formulas combine and interact in the performances of other musicians. Analysing formulas has the potential for opening up new understandings of *rāg*, revealing for example how the melodic patterns that characterise different *rāgs* are related to the cognitive needs of improvising musicians. Research on formulas also promises to increase our understanding of human capacities for music and language and of how they are related, with potential for interdisciplinary overlap with studies of music cognition.

My discussions of musical signs and the social significance of musical features, too, would seem to have wider applicability in the analysis of North Indian classical music. Future research could examine the extra-musical connotations of the musical features of *khyāl* and *dhrupad*,

considering their social significance. I touched on some of these issues when I discussed the gendered significance of some of the musical characteristics of classical genres in Chapter 5; this discussion could be extended to consider other kinds of meanings evoked by classical features.

The multifaceted, contextualised analytical approach I advocate here would seem to have wide applicability beyond *thumrī*. Such research promises to demonstrate, for Indian classical musicians, some of the social and musical complexities of the way in which, as Tim Rice puts it, “the individual inherits and appropriates musical practice, along with economic ideological and social practices, and then recreates, reconstructs and reinterprets them in each moment of the present” such that “the choice that he or she makes, the forms that tradition takes, and the interpretations of their meanings are self-interested, socially informed strategies at the intersection of the past with the present” (1994: 32). It also promises to reveal aspects of the genius of the musicians who manage to do all this, while also delighting their audiences with performances of great subtlety and beauty.

This can be meditative... Without saying the words, I am connecting myself somewhere.

02:00 02:10 "Oh my mother! Intensity."

He mā mā

Here, Sharma commented at length on how this performance was characteristic of how she used to sing when she was younger. She said, "And if I sing this *ghumrī* now, it will be different because I have seen life after this."

02:20 "Listen to me!" 02:30

pi - yā

02:40 02:50 (N) (D) (P)

na - hī pi-yā na-hī ā - - - - e

03:00 (M) (G) (R), (G) (R) (S) (N), (N) (S), 03:10

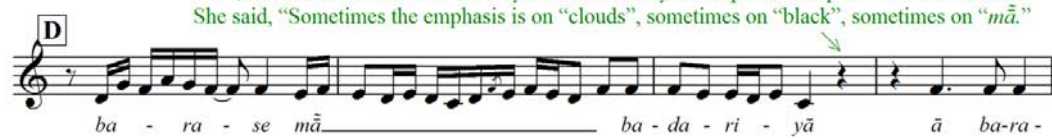
mā ho re mā ā He mā kā

03:20

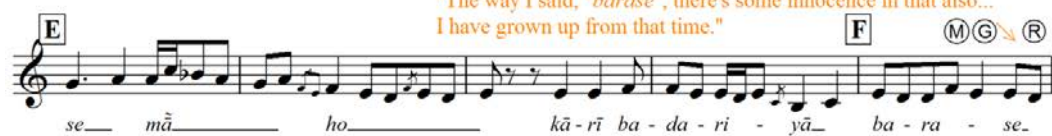
- rī ba-da-ri - yā



Here, Sharma commented on the way she varies the lyrics as part of the process of *bol banāo*. She said, "Sometimes the emphasis is on "clouds", sometimes on "black", sometimes on "mā."



"The way I said, "barase", there's some innocence in that also... I have grown up from that time."



"The way it's raining."



"Now it's like, 'Ma, come, come, come!'"



“The words are like that: he has not come.”

L **(M G R)** **M**

ba-da-ri-yā ba-ra-se pi-yā pi-yā na-hĩ ā-

Oscillating gesture **(N N D P)** **(M G R)** **"pukār"**

e mā ho He mā

(N D P O) **(M G R)**

kā rī ba-da-ri-yā ba-ra-se kā-rī ba-da-ri-yā

P **(M G R)** **Q** **"System. Ni, Sa."**

ba-ra-se He mā ba-

R **(M G)** **R** **"Slowly, you progress."**

da-ri-yā ba-ra-se kā-rī

S **(M G R)** **(M G R)** **(M G R)**

ba-da-ri-yā ba-ra-se ba-da-ri-yā

T **(M G R)** **G S N S** **U** **(M G R)**

ba-ra-se ba-ra-se kā-rī ba-da-ri-yā ba-ra-se

V **W**

He

(M) **(G R)** **X**

mā kā-rī ba-da-ri-

Transposition strategy

1 2 Y MGR 3 2 3 2 1 2 3 2 3 2 1 2

yā ba-ra-se ba-da-ri-yā ba-ra

MGR Z MGR M

se ba-da-ri-yā bara-se mā

AI G R 3 P S P MGR B1 M G R

He mā hō kā-rī bada-ri-yā ba-ra-se

C1 D1

E1

He mā hō

F1 3 M G R G1

ā mā pi-yā na-hī na-

Oscillating gesture

3 3 3 H1 MGR

hī ā e mā na-hī ā

I1 3 P S P MGR 3 MGR J1 MGR

- e na-hī ā e mā ba-da-ri-yā ba-ra-se

M G R K1

pi-yā na-hī ā e He mā

ba-ra - se mā kā-rī ba-da-ri-yā

ba-ra-se ba-da-ri-yā ba - ra-se mā ba-

da-ri-yā ba-ra - se mā jo- jo pa-pī-hā

pī-hū pī-hū ra-ṭa-ta he jo

jo pa pī - hā

jo jo pa-pī-hā pa-pī - hā jo jo

pa - pī - hā pī - hū pī - hū pī - hū pī -

-hū pī-hū pī - hū pī - hū jo

jo pa-pī-hā ā pī-hū pī-hū ra-ṭa-ta he mā

Downward chromatic sliding

I2

5

3

mā

J2

(N) (D) (P)

K2

3

mā

mā

(N) (D) (P) (D) (P)

L2

3

he mā jo jo pa-pī-hā

M2

(M)

(G)

(R)

(G) (R)

He 5 5 mā 3

"pukār"

N2

O2

he mā ā ho jo jo

P2

1 2 3

Q2

pa-pī-hā jo jo pa

Rhythmic staggering

Transposition strategy and rhythmic staggering

1 2 3 4

R2

(5)

"Bird!"

pī-hā pa-pī-hā he

(M) (G) (R) (N) (D) (P)

S2

mā jo jo pa-pī-hā pa pī-hā

T2

U2

V2 W2
 su - nī se - ja

X2 N D P
 mo - rā ji - ya - rā ta - ra - se he mǎ

Y2 M G R G R
 he mǎ he mǎ

Z2 A3
 ji - ya - rā ta - ra - se ji - ya - rā

B3
 ta - ra - se ji - ya - rā ji - ya - rā ta - ra -

Oscillating gesture C3
 se mǎ ji - ya -

D3 N E3 D P
 rā ji - ya - rā ji - ya - rā ji - ya - rā

F3 N D P
 ta - ra - se mǎ sū - nī se - ja mo - rā ji - ya - rā ta - ra -

G3 M G R
 se mǎ ho mǎ

From this point, Sharma spoke at length about the technicalities of the *laggi* section.

H3

kā - rī ba-da-ri - yā_ ba - ra - se He_ mǎ_ kā - rī ba - da-ri - yā_

I3 **J3**

ba - ra - se kǎ - rī ba - da-ri - yā_ ba - ra - se He_ mǎ_

K3 (M) (G) (R)

kā - rī ba - da-ri - yā_ ba - ra - se_ He_ mǎ_ kǎ - rī ba -

(N) (D) (P) **L3**

da - ri - yā_ ba - ra - se_ mǎ_ ho_ kǎ - rī ba -

(N) (D) (P) **M3**

da - ri - yā_ ba - ra - se_ mǎ_ ho_ kǎ - rī ba - da-ri - yā_

N3 **O3**

ba - ra - se_ mǎ_ ho_ kǎ - rī ba - da-ri - yā_ ba - ra - se mǎ_ ho_

P3 (M) (G) (R)

kā - rī ba - da-ri - yā_ ba - ra - se_ He_ mǎ_ kǎ - rī ba -

Q3

da - ri - yā_ kǎ - rī ba - da-ri - yā_ kǎ - rī ba - da-ri - yā_

15:30 (M) (G) (R), (G) (S) (N), (N) (S), 15:40

ba - ra se_ He_ mǎ_ mǎ_

APPENDIX I

Note on transcription

As is conventional in the transcription of Indian classical music when using Western staff notation, I have transposed the pitches so that the middle tonic is written as middle C. Accidentals apply only to the notes that they are immediately beside. (They do not, for example, last until the end of the bar in which they appear.)

I have shown the metrical cycle, or *tāl*, using bar-lines and rehearsal letters. Each rehearsal letter indicates the position of the *sam*, the first beat of the metrical cycle. Each cycle then consists of a number of *vibhāgs*, which I have shown here as measures. Each *vibhāg* contains a number of *matras* or beats, which I have shown as crotchets. In the case of unmetered music, I have taken the horizontal axis of the staff to represent the passage of time, roughly positioning noteheads according to how long they last.

In the Indian version of *solfege*, the scale degrees of Indian classical music are normally called *Sa*, *Re*, *Ga*, *Ma*, *Pa*, *Dha* and *Ni*, where *Sa* is the tonic, *Re* is the second scale degree etc. In transcription, scholars normally refer to each scale degree by its initial letter, so that *Sa* becomes S, *Re* becomes R etc. In their natural (*śuddh*) form, these are the scale degrees of the Western major scale. However, these may also be flattened or sharpened, depending on the *rāg*. If they are flattened (*komal*), then they are underlined. For example a flat *Ni* is written N. The only scale degree that can be sharpened is *Ma* (*tivra Ma*): this is written *Ṁ*. Notes in the upper octave (*tar saptak*) are shown with a dot above the letter; for example, upper *Sa* is written *Ṡ*. Notes in the lower octave (*mandra saptak*) are shown with a dot below the relevant letter; for example, *Ni* immediately below the middle tonic is written as *ṇ*.

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LIST OF FORMAL INTERVIEWS WITH MUSICIANS

Delhi (October 2009 to December 2009)

Ritesh Mishra, Rajshekhar Mansur, Rashmi Agarwal, Vidya Rao, Rekha Surya

Delhi (April 2010 to May 2010)

Sarathi Chatterjee, Sunanda Sharma

Calcutta (May 2010)

Moumita Mitra, Shubhra Guha, Ulhas Kashalkar

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